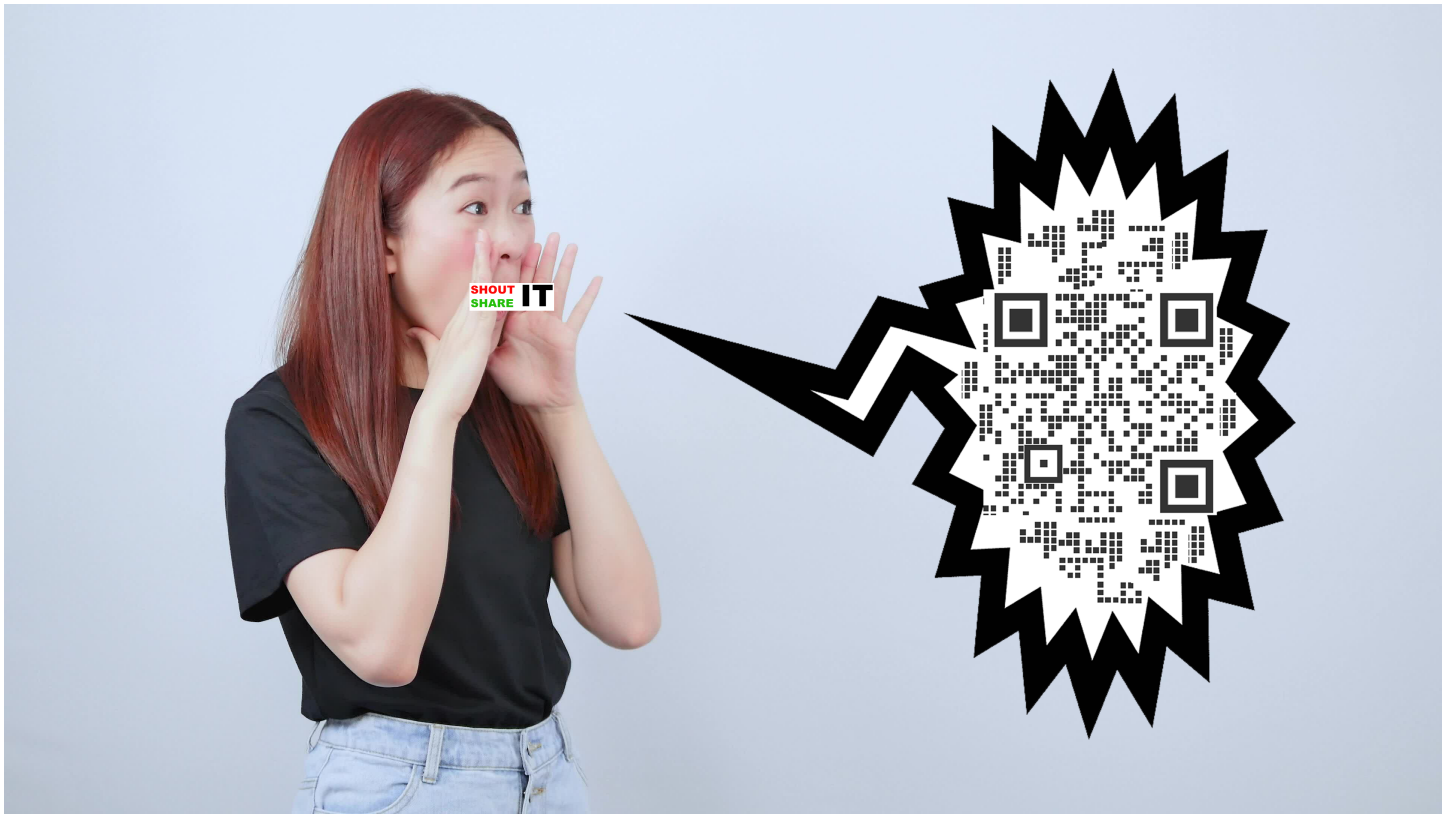
MY INDIA
THE INDIA ETERNAL

Swami Vivekananda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The Publisher's Note

Amar Bharat Amar Bharat, a book in Bengali on Swamiji's message to India, has had several reprints since it first appeared in 1986. Now it is being published in English to meet the demands of non-Bengali readers. The popularity of the book is understandable: Swami Vivekananda's words which it quotes rouse readers to new heights of courage, hope and strength. Tagore said, 'In him [Vivekananda] everything is positive and nothing negative.' The book bears testimony to that compliment.

Swami Vireswarananda, the tenth President of the Ramakrishna Math and the Ramakrishna Mission, inspired the book. The book is humbly dedicated to him.

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THE MESSAGE OF SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

—Swami Lokeswarananda

A western admirer once described Swami Vivekananda as being 'young in years but eternal in wisdom'. If you accept this ecstatic statement at its face value, it establishes the relevance of Swami Vivekananda's philosophy today. He had a brief life, of less than 40 years ; he passed away just as the present century was beginning. Two world wars have taken place since then and there has been astounding progress in science and technology. As a result, the world as a whole has changed, so has man—in his outlook and style of living. India, the country which was 'the queen of his adoration' (in the words of Sister Nivedita) is now an independent country (just as he had predicted—the country would be free within the next 50 years in most unforeseen circumstances) and like the world, India today faces problems unknown in his time. Can it still be said that Swami Vivekananda is relevant today ?

Man-making—his mission

Swami Vivekananda's relevance depends not on the nature of the problems we face but on the spirit with which those problems have to be tackled. His stress was on man himself, for, given the right kind of man, no problem need be daunting. 'Man-making is my mission', he used to say. Indeed, a country's future depends upon its people—how good, intelligent and capable they are.

Any country can produce one or two great men, but this is no guarantee that that country will be great. That may prove the country's potential, but unless the level of the average men and women in a given country is high that country cannot be said to be great. Swamiji used to say that one Buddha or Christ did not determine a country's fate, it was the common people who decided what the country's future would be like. According to him, the real power of the country lay with the masses. He described the neglect of the masses as a national sin. Most of her ills, he said, were due to this. The masses ('a sleeping leviathan', as he called them) possessed infinite power, but they were never given a chance to play their role in tackling national problems.

The masses remained mute spectators while the destiny of the nation was being decided by a handful of the so-called intelligentsia who knew nothing about the problems of common people and whose only claim to the authority they exercised was that they possessed university degrees! They in fact were more concerned about their own share in ruling the country and if they grumbled it was because they felt they did not enjoy the amount of power they deserved. What happened to the common people—their persecution by the upper castes, their ignorance, poverty—all these were of no concern to them. Yet they claimed to speak for the whole nation. They were spineless people who owed no allegiance to the country or its people, who had no courage to stand up to those who insulted them or their country. In exasperation, Swami Vivekananda described them as 'mummies', who had ceased to exist and yet continued to influence people as symbols of a glory they once possessed.

Uplifting the masses

Has the picture changed much even 40 years after India's independence? It is the urban middle-class who still dominates. The masses hardly have much say in all that is going on in the country. They neither plan nor

implement though the need for their involvement in nation-building processes is recognized. No wonder the country's progress is tardy. In his vision of a new India, Swami Vivekananda wanted that the Sudras (this is the term he applied to the working people) should be on top. He said he was a socialist, adding at the same time, 'not that socialism is perfect, but half a loaf is better than none.' His understanding of history had convinced him that revolution was bound to come sooner or later. He mentioned two countries where it would come first—Russia and China. This was sometime in the nineties of the last century. How he had this hunch no one knows. Neither does one know if he would have approved of the way revolution took place in these two countries.

As for India, it is clear that he preferred evolution rather than revolution. Did he know the price a country paid when it went through a revolution ? That he did not want a violent change in India is clear when he said that he wanted a process of 'levelling-up' and no 'levelling-down'. That is to say, he wanted that the working people should have opportunities enough to catch up with the intelligentsia of the country. It is not that the intelligentsia have to go down to make room for the working people.

Character-building through education

The working people, who had long been neglected and had had no access to education, should now receive special attention so that they could quickly overcome their initial drawbacks. He wanted education to reach out to them rather than they come to education. He had rightly diagnosed that making education free was not enough. A further incentive was necessary : education should be available to them at their doorstep, and not only should it be free, a working man's child should have five teachers as against one provided for a child coming from an enlightened family. This is what he said to the ruler of Mysore when the latter was planning to introduce free education within his state. Swamiji laid great stress on

education. He considered it the panacea of all the ills India was suffering from.

But what kind of education ? Surely not merely book-learning, passing examinations, getting degrees and certificates ! Education to him was not information but something more meaningful : it was man-making, life-giving and character-building ; it was assimilation of ideas. It included also acquisition of skills so that it could be productive. He thought it a pity that the existing system of education did not enable a man to stand on his own feet, nor did it teach him self-respect and self-confidence. He wanted an education for India which would combine her idealism with Western efficiency. India had produced high thoughts but few of those thoughts had ever been put into practice. He attributed all her social evils to this lacuna. He pointed to the caste system as an example. Based on the principle of division of labour, it was an ideal institution. It was intended to give each individual a chance to grow as best he could according to his genius, but when it became stratified and hereditary, it became most stultifying and therefore self-defeating. No one has condemned the caste practices in more scathing terms than Swami Vivekananda. But what is the remedy for this ? Again, Swamiji would say, 'Education'. Given good education, those who are backward now would come into their own.

Spiritual power to the rescue

It was Swamiji's hope also that the upper classes would welcome any move that society might make for the progress of the backward classes. It was also his hope that they themselves would initiate the move and make any sacrifice necessary to help quicken their progress. This would be perfectly in keeping with what he described as being India's national ideals—renunciation and service. Should they fail to do this, it would be a bad day for them as well as for the country. History testifies that this warning was necessary. Wherever social change meets

with resistance by vested interests, violence breaks out. This is why Swamiji wanted that, in India's case, at least this change, long overdue, should be smooth and peaceful. In India's long history, she has again and again been threatened by forces from within the country and outside ; yet she has weathered the crisis each time by her flexibility. She has accepted change without giving up her basic spiritual character. This is how she has remained, by and large, the same country through the centuries. It is because of this capacity to assimilate new thoughts, to adjust to new pressures, to change according to new circumstances, that she has been able to avert total disaster. Each time a crisis has engulfed her, she has emerged stronger, with a new look perhaps, but basically the same in spirit.

As Swamiji foresaw the rise of the working people, he also apprehended that this might be accompanied by a decline in cultural standards. Later evidence in countries where revolutions have occurred confirms that Swamiji was right. Lest this should happen in India, Swamiji wanted that, while the ground was being prepared for the awakening of the working people, adequate attention should be paid to educating the masses about India's spiritual traditions. He gave the call, 'Deluge the country with spiritual ideas.' What ideas in particular had he in mind ? Obviously, the ideas which have influenced Indian culture most—truth, justice, love, peace, harmony and so on. These ideas have induced in the Indian mind a natural revulsion against violence. Swami Vivekananda's great concern was that the kind of social change he envisaged should cause no hurt to Indian traditions, rather it should uphold them. His first priority was the continuity of these traditions. In them lay India's strength. So long as India remained true to those traditions, she was safe. India should preserve those traditions not only for her own sake but also for the sake of the world. No country in the world had the distinction of possessing such traditions which she had nurtured and cherished over the centuries.

Progress through science and technology

The poverty of India troubled Vivekananda's mind. Touring rural India, he had seen the misery of the people. He had, at the same time, been struck by their noble character. He hated the British because they had drained the country's wealth in a systematic manner. He hated the so-called upper-class Indians no less for their selfishness and callousness about the conditions of their own countrymen. In the final years of his life, he shunned their company as far as possible.

But how could the problem of poverty be solved ? He thought the solution of the problem lay in science and technology. India must make wide use of western science and technology to create an industrial revolution in the country. He had seen how the West had won its battle against poverty through science and technology. Nearer home, Japan also had done the same trick through science and technology. He wanted that in fighting poverty India should follow in the footsteps of the West, but in no other matter should she imitate it.

The Indian way of life

Vivekananda was impressed by the material prosperity of the West, but he had also observed how it had blunted its moral perceptions. He wanted that India should attain the same material prosperity yet retain her love for moral values. People in the West had a craze for sense-pleasure, which Swami Vivekananda did not like. He wanted to combine material prosperity with deep moral sensitivity. This has been the Indian way throughout her history.

Nothing Swami Vivekananda preached is outdated. He preached modern thoughts, but he was a far-seeing man to whom the immediate alone was not important, so was what was to follow in the distant future. He was interested in everything concerning man—not only religion, but also science, art, literature, history, politics, in short, everything. His views on some of these subjects

were also radical. For instance, he wanted India to have a classless and casteless society. He said that she should have an Islamic body with Vedantic brains. He was an admirer of Islam to the extent that it did not encourage any class or caste distinctions. But, according to him, the ideal society was not only casteless and classless, but one which aimed at the kind of spiritual development which the Vedanta envisaged. That is why he advocated a society which had an Islamic character but also a thrust towards the maximum spiritual growth.

India's present problems are many : poverty, illiteracy, casteism, lack of cohesion. But these are not new problems. They existed even in Swamiji's time. He gave much thought to them and expressed views about their solution which are as valid as ever. He was not for ready-made solutions, but for solutions determined with due regard to history and circumstances. He was not for imitating other countries, either. Each country had to tackle its problem in its own way, according to its genius. His emphasis was on the will, the right approach and character of the people. The present problems may be solved, but there will soon be other problems. Life without problems is inconceivable. But given these qualities, no problems need prove intractable.

Swami Vivekananda's vision

Swami Vivekananda had made three predictions, two of which have come true. The first and most important of these was about India's freedom. Way back in the nineties of the last century he had said, 'India would be free within the next 50 years in unforeseen circumstances.' This has happened. When he said this, few heard it, and no one, at any rate, attached any importance to it. It seemed least likely that this would happen. People, at large, were happy to be ruled by the British. To them British rule meant the rule of law, the rule of equality and justice. There was hardly any political consciousness as such

among the people. The concept of political freedom was unknown to them. Even the intelligentsia were not sure what they wanted. A handful of them wanted better jobs and the role of a junior partner in the administration of the country, if possible. The thought of an independent India never crossed their minds. Some of them even thought British rule was a blessing. They wanted it to continue for the sake of the country's peace and progress. It is against this backdrop that Swami Vivekananda had made the prediction that the country would be free within the next fifty years.

His other more significant prediction was that the first Proletariat Revolution would take place in Russia, which no one thought would or could happen. Marx, the protagonist of the proletariat revolution had said that it would happen where the trade union movement was pretty strong. On this token, he predicted it would happen in Germany. Yet, contrary to Marx's prognosis, the first Proletariat Revolution took place in Russia, basically an agriculturist country, without any organized labour movement. How did it happen? How did Swami Vivekananda make these correct predictions? It is difficult to say. It is known that he had been a good student of history and as such, his perception of historical forces was also deep and sound.

Vivekananda made yet another prediction which one is waiting to see come true—that India would some day rise to great heights of prosperity and power, far more than she had done in the past. The present picture of India gives no hint of such a possibility. Far from such an augury, today she is beleaguered by problems which some think may very well spell her doom. Some of these problems are of course old, almost eternal—poverty, illiteracy and caste—in existence before Independence, and as strong and pernicious as ever. But somehow or the other India has learnt to live with them and they need not worry her too much. The new problems that are really ominous are separatism of ethnic groups and religious

fundamentalism. The country has already suffered a major partition on religious grounds and the question that is bothering everybody is, if more partitions follow what now remains of India will cease to exist.

Live and let live

Swamiji obviously had a hunch that this would be the situation if India followed Western methods in her politics, which he warned India against imitating. The West is by nature exclusive and, therefore, intolerant. India, on the other hand, always welcomed new ethnic groups and with them, new thoughts and ways of life, absorbing them and making them her own. Where are the Greeks, the Scythians, the Mongols and the Huns today ? They have all merged into the Indian identity. India today is a fine mosaic of many races, cultures and traditions all knit together by cords of mutual love and goodwill. She has always been multi-racial and multi-religious.

There have been people who are highly developed in the midst of people who are comparatively backward. Yet they have always lived together in peace and amity, with hardly any clashes embittering their relations. Most of them have been fully assimilated, but if some have preferred to stay separate, they have stayed so. 'Live and let live' has been India's policy. She has always been a believer in the philosophy of 'unity in diversity'. God is one, so is man. She has never tried to interfere with the freedom of any group. This is why there are so many sects even within a single religious community. Swamiji welcomed the multiplicity of sects. He knew growth was possible where there was freedom. If there was free growth, diversity was inevitable. Diversity is natural, uniformity is artificial. Each must grow in his own way, otherwise he cannot grow at all. India has always believed in this principle and has lived up to it too. But where is unity then ? The unity is in the respect that each has for the other and the commonalty of ideals. According to Swamiji, India's national ideals are renunciation and

service. That is to say, each group renounces for the other and thus serves the nation. This is the way diversity has helped strengthen Indian unity. This is the way integration is possible in any multi-racial society. One only hopes India would stay true to these national ideals and not be infatuated by the lust for power which is the peculiar feature of Western politics. In India, the aim of politics should be to serve, not to rule.

Working classes measuring up to intelligentsia

Swamiji knew that the day was not far when a new India would emerge, where power would rest not with the intelligentsia (the Brahmins), but with the working people (the Sudras). The sooner this happened, the better for the country. He also hoped that the intelligentsia would welcome this change, for their own sake and for the sake of the country. Elsewhere this change has been accompanied by violence. In India's case, no violence need happen, only if the intelligentsia acted in conformity with the national ideals. Indian society has always shown a remarkable degree of flexibility and adjusted itself to suit the needs of the hour.

If not fully, partially at least, Swamiji's prediction has come true. The working people today are far more powerful than ever before. They are better off and slowly catching up with the intelligentsia. It was not however, Swamiji's intention that the intellectual and moral level of the country should go down in the process of this kind of social change. This is why he wanted that children of the working people be given more opportunities for education than even those of the intelligentsia. Above all, he wanted India to remain culturally and morally as strong as ever. He believed in 'levelling-up' and not 'levelling-down'. This exactly is what is happening in independent India—a happy sign.

An Islamic body with Vedantic brains

Swamiji's vision was of the working people coming to

power and their cultural and moral level going up, with India as a society which would be classless and casteless. His favourite description of that society was that it would be 'an Islamic body with Vedantic brains'. The ideal society should also be one which would constantly strive for a higher level of moral perfection (which he called 'Vedantic').

The first priority in the programme of work he had outlined for his country was to eradicate poverty. He knew what India needed was an industrial revolution. For this what was necessary was to spread the study of science and technology throughout the country. India had at one time been far ahead of other countries in science and technology, but for centuries she had stagnated and fallen behind other countries in every aspect. The poverty of the people was killing them, physically and spiritually. On top of everything, an inertia had set in, which made people accept the situation as inevitable. This is what hurt him most. The British took advantage of the situation and exploited the people with shameless brutality. He advised Jamshedji Tata to set up an Institute where advanced research could be made. They were travelling on board the same ship, Tata for Japan and he for the USA. Tata was trying to import industrial products from Japan. Swamiji did not like the idea. He wanted Tata not only to act as a pioneer in industrializing India, but also have a research centre so that a continuous flow of know-how might keep up the tempo of industrial expansion. Tata followed Swamiji's advice. He did set up an Institute of Research which is well-known throughout the world. Interestingly enough, he invited Swami Vivekananda to be its first director. What reply Swamiji gave is not however known.

Science-religion nexus

Vivekananda knew that the strength of a nation lay not in its size or wealth, but in its character. It was his hope that India would set an example of how science and

religion could meet, science taking care of man's physical needs and religion of his moral and spiritual needs. A rich man is not necessarily a moral man. 'Man-making is my mission.' He realized that no society could survive unless its human element was good and strong. He was impressed by the West's dynamism, power of organization, and its achievements in science and technology. But he also noticed its preoccupation with sense-pleasure and indifference about moral development. He knew there could be no peace for the individual and no progress for society as a whole unless there was a happy balance between the material prosperity and moral advancement.

As the years go by, India is slowly winning its battle against poverty. On the food front, her achievement is remarkable. Immediately after Independence, she had to depend largely upon imports to give her people a square meal a day. Today she is on her way to achieving self-sufficiency in food production. India has gone through a green revolution. She often witnesses floods as well as droughts. Yet she is able to feed her people without any aid from outside. Her progress in science and technology has also been remarkable. Today she ranks among the most technologically advanced countries in the world. In engineering technology she is self-sufficient and is even able to help many developing countries.

But alas ! there are still pockets of poverty in the country. Also social injustice is not completely eliminated and illiteracy is still a problem. How can Swami Vivekananda's views of India become a reality so long as these problems remain unsolved ? He was an impatient man, he knew that what India needed was courage and self-confidence. The problems are India's, and India has to find the solutions herself. She was not for copying others, far less depending upon them. She must, by her own efforts, solve her problems, the current ones as well as those that may come in her way in the future.

MY INDIA, THE INDIA ETERNAL

India's history, culture and ideals

If there is any land on this earth that can lay claim to be the blessed Punya Bhumi, ... the land where humanity has attained its highest towards gentleness, towards generosity, towards purity, towards calmness, above all, the land of introspection and of spirituality—it is India.[1]

Political greatness or military power is never the mission of our race ; it never was, and, ... it never will be.[2]

But we find that the Indian race never stood for wealth. Although they acquired immense wealth, perhaps more than any other nation ever acquired, yet the nation did not stand for wealth. It was a powerful race for ages, yet we find that that nation never stood for power, never went out of the country to conquer. Quite content within their own boundaries, they never fought anybody. The Indian nation never stood for imperial glory. Wealth and power, then, were not the ideals of the race.[3]

Ay, a glorious destiny, my brethren, for as far back as the days of the Upanishads we have thrown the challenge to the world : न प्रजया न धनेन त्यागेनैके अमृतत्वमानशुः (*Kaivalya Upanishad*, 2)—'Not by progeny, not by wealth, but by renunciation alone immortality is reached.' Race after race has taken the challenge up and tried their utmost to solve the world-riddle on the plane of desires. They have all failed in the past—the old ones have become extinct under the weight of wickedness and misery, which lust for power and gold brings in its train, and the new ones are tottering to their fall. The question has yet to be decided whether peace will survive or war ; whether patience will survive or non-forbearance ; whether goodness will

survive or wickedness ; whether muscle will survive or brain ; whether worldliness will survive or spirituality. We have solved our problem ages ago, and held on to it through good or evil fortune, and mean to hold on to it till the end of time. Our solution is unworldliness—renunciation.

This is the theme of Indian life-work, the burden of her eternal songs, the backbone of her existence, the foundation of her being, the *raison d'être* of her very existence—the spiritualization of the human race. In this her life-course she has never deviated, whether the Tartar ruled or the Turk, whether the Mogul ruled or the English.[4]

It is unfair to judge women in the east by the western standard. In the west woman is the wife ; in the east she is the mother. The Hindoos worship the idea of mother, and even the monks are required to touch the earth with their foreheads before their mothers. Chastity is much esteemed.[5]

In India the mother is the centre of the family and our highest ideal. She is to us the representative of God, as God is the mother of the Universe. It was a female sage who first found the unity of God, and laid down this doctrine in one of the first hymns of the Vedas.... He is of the 'arian' race, who is born through prayer, and he is a nonarian, who is born through sensuality.

...So deeply has this been recognized in India, that there we even speak of adultery in marriage, except when marriage is consummated in prayer.... That is the secret of the race—chastity.[6]

There are two great epics in the Sanskrit language, which are very ancient.... They embody the manners and customs, the state of society, civilization, etc., of the ancient Indians. The oldest of these epics is called Ramayana, 'The Life of Rama'.... Rama and Sita are the ideals of the Indian nation. All children, especially girls, worship Sita. The height of a woman's ambition is to be like Sita, the pure, the devoted, the all-suffering ![7]

Mahabharata means Great India, or the story of the great descendants of Bharata.... This epic is the most popular one in India ; and it exercises the same authority in India as Homer's poems did over the Greeks.... The internal conflicts between righteousness and filial affection in the mind of the god-fearing, yet feeble, old, blind King Dhritarashtra ; the majestic character of the grandsire Bhishma ; the noble and virtuous nature of the royal Yudhishthira, and of the other four brothers, as mighty in valour as in devotion and loyalty ; the peerless character of Krishna, unsurpassed in human wisdom ; and not less brilliant, the characters of the women—the stately queen Gandhari, the loving mother Kunti, the ever-devoted and all-suffering Draupadi—these and hundreds of other characters of this Epic and those of the Ramayana have been the cherished heritage of the whole Hindu world for the last several thousands of years and form the basis of their thoughts and of their moral and ethical ideas. In fact, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata are the two encyclopaedias of the ancient Aryan life and wisdom, portraying an ideal civilization which humanity has yet to aspire after.[8]

When you study these characters, you can at once find out how different is the ideal in India from that of the West.... The West says, 'Do ! Show your power by doing.' India says, 'Show your power by suffering.' The West has solved the problem of how much a man can have : India has solved the problem of how little a man can have.[9]

India's contribution to the world

The debt which the world owes to our Motherland is immense.[10]

As I look back upon the history of my country, I do not find in the whole world another country which has done quite so much for the improvement of the human mind. Therefore I have no words of condemnation for my nation. I tell them, 'You have done well ; only try to do better.'[11]

We Hindoos stand ready to be convinced that yours is the earlier religion, although we had ours some three hundred years before yours was even thought of.

The same holds good with respect to sciences. India has given to antiquity the earliest scientifical physicians, and, according to Sir William Hunter, she has even contributed to modern medical science by the discovery of various chemicals and by teaching you how to reform misshapen ears and noses. Even more it has done in mathematics, for algebra, geometry, astronomy, and the triumph of modern science—mixed mathematics—were all invented in India, just so much as the ten numerals, the very cornerstone of all present civilization, were discovered in India, and are in reality, Sanskrit words.

In philosophy we are even now head and shoulders above any other nation, as Schopenhauer, the great German philosopher, has confessed. In music India gave to the world her system of notation, with the seven cardinal notes and the diatonic scale.... In philology, our Sanskrit language is now universally acknowledged to be the foundation of all European languages....

In literature, our epics and poems and dramas rank as high as those of any language; our 'Shaguntala' [Shakuntala] was summarized by Germany's greatest poet, as 'heaven and earth united'. India has given to the world the fables of Aesop, which were copied by Aesop from an old Sanskrit book; it has given the Arabian Nights, yes, even the story of Cinderella and the Bean Stalks. In manufacture, India was the first to make cotton and purple (dye), it was proficient in all works of jewelry, and the very word 'sugar', as well as the article itself, is the product of India. Lastly she has invented the game of chess and the cards and the dice. So great, in fact, was the superiority of India in every respect, that it drew to her borders the hungry cohorts of Europe, and thereby indirectly brought about the discovery of America.[12]

And I challenge anybody to show one single period of her national life when India was lacking in spiritual

giants, capable of moving the world. But her work is spiritual, and that cannot be done with blasts of war-trumpets or the march of cohorts. Her influence has always fallen upon the world like that of the gentle dew, unheard and scarcely marked, yet bringing into bloom the fairest flowers of the earth.[13]

Religion in Indian life

Here in this blessed land, the foundation, the backbone, the life-centre is religion and religion alone. Let others talk of politics, of the glory of acquisition of immense wealth poured in by trade, of the power and spread of commercialism, of the glorious fountain of physical liberty ; but these the Hindu mind does not understand and does not want to understand. Touch him on spirituality, on religion, on God, on the soul, on the Infinite, on spiritual freedom, and I assure you, the lowest peasant in India is better informed on these subjects than many a so-called philosopher in other lands.... We have yet something to teach to the world. This is the very reason, the *raison d'être*, that this nation has lived on, in spite of hundreds of years of persecution, in spite of nearly a thousand years of foreign rule and foreign oppression. This nation still lives ; the *raison d'être* is, it still holds to God, to the treasure-house of religion and spirituality.[14]

I have seen a little of the world, travelling among the races of the East and the West ; and everywhere I find among nations one great ideal which forms the backbone, so to speak, of that race. With some it is politics, with others it is social culture ; others again may have intellectual culture and so on for their national background. But this, our motherland, has religion and religion alone for its basis, for its backbone, for the bed-rock upon which the whole building of its life has been based.[15]

See Rome. Rome's mission was imperial power, expansion. And so soon as that was touched, Rome fell to

pieces, passed out. The mission of Greece was intellect, as soon as that was touched, why, Greece passed out. So in modern times, Spain and all these modern countries. Each nation has a mission for the world. So long as that mission is not hurt, that nation lives, despite every difficulty. But as soon as its mission is destroyed, the nation collapses.

Now, that vitality of India has not been touched yet. They have not given up that, and it is still strong—in spite of all their superstitions. Hideous superstitions are there, most revolting some of them. Never mind. The national life-current is still there—the mission of the race....

God, and God alone. She clings unto that like grim death. Still there is hope there.[16]

The Hindu man drinks religiously, sleeps religiously, walks religiously, marries religiously, robs religiously.... That shows that the vitality of the race, the mission of the race is religion ; and because that has not been touched, therefore that race lives.[17]

Every other problem in life must be subordinated to that one principal theme (religion). That is also the law of harmony in music. There may be a nation whose theme of life is political supremacy ; religion and everything else must become subordinate to that one great theme of its life. But here is another nation whose great theme of life is spirituality and renunciation, whose one watchword is that this world is all vanity and a delusion of three days.[18]

The eternal India

India I loved before I came away. Now the very dust of India has become holy to me, the very air is now to me holy ; it is now the holy land, the place of pilgrimage, the Tirtha ![19]

We all hear so much about the degradation of India. There was a time when I also believed in it. But today standing on the vantage-ground of experience, with eyes cleared of obstructive predispositions and above all, of the highly-coloured pictures of other countries toned down to their proper shade and light by actual contact, I confess, in

all humility, that I was wrong. Thou blessed land of the Aryas, thou wast never degraded. Sceptres have been broken and thrown away, the ball of power has passed from hand to hand, but in India, courts and kings always touched only a few ; the vast mass of the people, from the highest to the lowest, has been left to pursue its own inevitable course, the current of national life flowing at times slow and half-conscious, at others, strong and awakened. I stand in awe before the unbroken procession of scores of shining centuries, with here and there a dim link in the chain, only to flare up with added brilliance in the next, and there she is walking with her own majestic steps—my motherland—to fulfil her glorious destiny, which no power on earth or in heaven can check—the regeneration of man the brute into man the God.[20]

This national ship, my countrymen, my friends, my children—this national ship has been ferrying millions and millions of souls across the waters of life.... But today, perhaps through your own fault, this boat has become a little damaged, has sprung a leak ; and would you therefore curse it ? Is it fit that you stand up and pronounce malediction upon it, one that has done more work than any other thing in the world ? If there are holes in this national ship, this society of ours, we are its children. Let us go and stop the holes. Let us gladly do it with our heart's blood ; and if we cannot, then let us die. We will make a plug of our brains and put them into the ship, but condemn it never. Say not one harsh word against this society. I love it for its past greatness. I love you all because you are the children of gods, and because you are the children of the glorious forefathers. How then can I curse you ! Never. All blessings be upon you ! I have come to you, my children, to tell you all my plans. If you hear them I am ready to work with you. But if you will not listen to them, and even kick me out of India, I will come back and tell you that we are all sinking ! I am come now to sit in your midst, and if we are to sink, let us all sink together, but never let curses rise to our lips.[21]

O India ! forget not

O India ! Forget not that the ideal of thy womanhood is Sita, Savitri, Damayanti ; forget not that the God thou worshippest is the great Ascetic of ascetics the all-renouncing Shankara, the Lord of Uma ; forget not that thy marriage, thy wealth, thy life are not for sense-pleasure, are not for thy individual personal happiness ; forget not that thou art born as a sacrifice to the Mother's altar ; forget not that thy social order is but the reflex of the Infinite Universal Motherhood ; forget not that the lower classes, the ignorant, the poor, the illiterate, the cobbler, the sweeper, are thy flesh and blood, thy brothers. Thou brave one be bold, take courage, be proud that thou art an Indian, and proudly proclaim, 'I am an Indian, every Indian is my brother.' Say, 'The ignorant Indian, the poor and destitute Indian, the Brahmin Indian, the pariah Indian, is my brother.' Thou, too, clad with but a rag round thy loins, proudly proclaim at the top of thy voice : 'The Indian is my brother, the Indian is my life, India's gods and goddesses are my God, India's society is the cradle of my infancy, the pleasure-garden of my youth, the sacred heaven, the Varanasi of my old age.' Say, brother : 'The soil of India is my highest heaven, the good of India is my good,' and repeat and pray day and night, 'O Thou Lord of Gauri, O Thou Mother of the Universe, vouchsafe manliness unto me ! O Thou Mother of Strength, take away my weakness, take away my unmanliness, and Make me a Man !'[22]

CAUSES OF OUR DOWNFALL

The great national sin—the neglect of the masses

I consider that the great national sin is the neglect of the masses, and that is one of the causes of our downfall.[1]

Those uncared-for lower classes of India—the peasants and weavers and the rest, who have been conquered by foreigners and are looked down upon by their own people—it is they who from time immemorial have been working silently, without even getting the remuneration of their labours![2]

The poor, the low, the sinner in India have no friends, no help—they cannot rise, try however they may. They sink lower and lower every day, they feel the blows showered upon them by a cruel society and they do not know whence the blow comes.[3]

The one thing that is at the root of all evils in India is the condition of the poor,... Priest-power and foreign conquest have trodden them down for centuries, and at last the poor of India have forgotten that they are human beings.[4]

People cheated—evidences from history

Ancient India had for centuries been the battlefield for the ambitious projects of two of her foremost classes—the Brahmins and the Kshatriyas.

On the one hand, the priesthood stood between the lawless social tyranny of the princes over the masses, whom the Kshatriyas declared to be their legal food. On the other hand, the Kshatriya power was the one potent force which struggled with any success against the

spiritual tyranny of the priesthood and the ever-increasing chain of ceremonials which they were forging to bind down the people with.

The tug of war began in the earliest periods of the history of our race, and throughout the Shrutis it can be distinctly traced. A momentary lull came when Shri Krishna, leading the faction of Kshatriya power and of Jnana, showed the way to reconciliation. The result was the teachings of the Gita—the essence of philosophy, of liberality, of religion....

The ambition of these two classes to be the masters of the poor and ignorant was there, and the strife once more became fierce. The meagre literature that has come down to us from that period brings to us but faint echoes of that mighty past strife, but at last it broke out as a victory for the Kshatriyas, a victory for Jnana, for liberty—and ceremonial had to go down, much of it for ever. This upheaval was what is known as the Buddhistic reformation. On the religious side, it represented freedom from ceremonial ; on the political side, overthrow of the priesthood by the Kshatriyas.

It is a significant fact that the two greatest men ancient India produced were both Kshatriyas—Krishna and Buddha ; and still more significant is the fact that both of these God-men threw open the door of knowledge to everyone, irrespective of birth or sex.

In spite of its wonderful moral strength, Buddhism was extremely iconoclastic ; and much of its force being spent in merely negative attempts, it had to die out in the land of its birth, and what remained of it became full of superstitions and ceremonials, a hundred times cruder than those it was intended to suppress....

Thus, even the current of life, set in motion by the greatest soul that ever wore a human form, the Bhagavan Buddha himself, became a miasmatic pool, and India had to wait for centuries until Shankara arose, followed in quick succession by Ramanuja and Madhva....

The result was the bringing back of the Vedas to

India—a revival of Vedanta, such as India never before had seen ; even the householders began to study the Aranyakas.

In the Buddhistic movement, the Kshatriyas were the real leaders, and whole masses of them became Buddhists. In the zeal of reform and conversion, the popular dialects had been almost exclusively cultivated, to the neglect of Sanskrit, and the larger portion of Kshatriyas had become disjointed from the Vedic literature and Sanskrit learning. Thus this wave of reform, which came from the South, benefited to a certain extent the priesthood, and the priests only. For the rest of India's millions, it forged more chains than they had ever known before.

The Kshatriyas have always been the backbone of India, so also they had been the supporters of science and liberty, and their voices had rung out again and again to clear the land from superstitions ; and throughout the history of India they ever formed the invulnerable barrier to aggressive priestly tyranny.

When the greater part of their number sank into ignorance, and another portion mixed their blood with savages from Central Asia and lent their swords to establish the rules of priests in India, her cup became full to the brim, and down sank the land of Bharata, not to rise again, until the Kshatriya rouses himself, and making himself free, strikes the chains from the feet of the rest.[5]

The nation is sinking, the curse of unnumbered millions is on our heads ... the unnumbered millions to whom we have talked of Advaita and whom we have hated with all our strength, the unnumbered millions for whom we have invented the doctrine of Lokachara (usage), to whom we have talked theoretically that we are all the same and all are one with the same Lord, without even an ounce of practice.[6]

Mass oppression in the name of religion

No religion on earth preaches the dignity of humanity in such a lofty strain as Hinduism, and no religion on

earth treads upon the necks of the poor and the low in such a fashion as Hinduism.[7]

In India there is a howling cry that we are very poor, but how many charitable associations are there for the well-being of the poor? How many people really weep for the sorrows and sufferings of the millions of poor in India? Are we men? What are we doing for their livelihood, for their improvement? We do not touch them, we avoid their company! Are we men? Those thousands of brahmanas—what are they doing for the low, downtrodden masses of India? 'Don't touch', 'Don't touch', is the only phrase that plays upon their lips! How mean and degraded has our eternal religion become at their hands! Wherein does our religion lie now? In 'Don't touchism' alone, and nowhere else![8]

Priestcraft is the bane of India. Can man degrade his brother and himself escape degradation?... The greatest of all truths, discovered by your ancestors, is that the universe is one. Can one injure anyone without injuring himself? The mass of Brahmin and Kshatriya tyranny has recoiled upon their own heads with compound interest; and a thousand years of slavery and degradation is what the inexorable law of Karma is visiting upon them.[9]

Another cause : monopoly of education

The chief cause of India's ruin has been the monopolizing of the whole education and intelligence of the land, by dint of pride and royal authority, among a handful of men.[10]

The whole difference between the West and the East is in this : They are nations, we are not, i.e., civilization, education here is general, it penetrates into the masses. The higher classes in India and America are the same, but the distance is infinite between the lower classes of the two countries. Why was it so easy for the English to conquer India? It was because they are a nation, we are not. When one of our great men dies, we must sit for centuries to have another; they can produce them as fast

as they die.... It is the dearth of great ones. Why so? Because they have such a bigger field of recruiting their great ones, we have so small. A nation of 300 millions has the smallest field of recruiting its great ones compared with nations of thirty, forty, or sixty millions, because the number of educated men and women in those nations is so great.... This is the great defect in our nation and must be removed.[11]

People have been taught—they are non-entities

For centuries people have been taught theories of degradation. They have been told that they are nothing. The masses have been told all over the world that they are not human beings. They have been so frightened for centuries, till they have nearly become animals. Never were they allowed to hear of the Atman.[12]

Laziness and meanness

We would do nothing ourselves and would scoff at others who try to do something—this is the bane that has brought about our downfall as a nation. Want of sympathy and lack of energy are at the root of all misery, and you must therefore give these two up. Who but the Lord knows what potentialities there are in particular individuals—let all have opportunities, and leave the rest to the Lord. It is indeed very difficult to have an equal love for all, but without it there is no Mukti.[13] (Salvation)

And yet another cause—exclusiveness

One of the great causes of India's misery and downfall has been that she narrowed herself, went into her shell as the oyster does, and refused to give her jewels and her treasures to the other races of mankind, refused to give the life-giving truths to thirsting nations outside the Aryan fold. That has been the one great cause; that we did not go out, that we did not compare notes with other nations....[14]

No man, no nation, my son, can hate others and live;

India's doom was sealed the very day they invented the word *mlechchha* and stopped from communion with others.[15]

Whatever cloak ancient or modern sophistry may try to throw over it, the inevitable result—the vindication of the moral law, that none can hate others without degenerating himself—is that the race that was foremost amongst the ancient races is now a byword, and a scorn among nations.[16]

Lack of organization

Our nation is totally lacking in the faculty of organization. It is this one drawback which produces all sorts of evil. We are altogether averse to making a common cause for anything. The first requisite for organization is obedience.[17]

In spite of the greatness of the Upanishads, in spite of our boasted ancestry of sages, compared to many other races, I must tell you that we are weak, very weak. First of all is our physical weakness. That physical weakness is the cause of at least one-third of our miseries. We are lazy, we cannot work ; we cannot combine, we do not love each other ; we are intensely selfish, not three of us can come together without hating each other, without being jealous of each other.... We speak of many things parrot-like, but never do them ; speaking and not doing has become a habit with us. What is the cause of that ? Physical weakness. This sort of weak brain is not able to do anything ; we must strengthen it.[18]

Another great sin—neglect of womenfolk

In India there are two great evils. Trampling on the women, and grinding the poor through caste restrictions.[19]

Do you know who is the real 'Shakti-worshipper' ? It is he who knows that God is the omnipresent force in the universe and sees in women the manifestation of that Force.... Manu, again, has said that gods bless those families where women are happy and well treated. Here

men (in Western countries) treat their women as well as can be desired, and hence they are so prosperous, so learned, so free, and so energetic. But why is it that we are slavish, miserable, and dead ? The answer is obvious.[20]

Why is it that our country is the weakest and the most backward of all countries ?—Because Shakti is held in dishonour there.[21]

WAY TO REGENERATION

Do not destroy

In the first place I would ask mankind to recognize this maxim, 'Do not destroy'. Iconoclastic reformers do no good to the world. Break not, pull not anything down, but build. Help, if you can ; if you cannot, fold your hands and stand by and see things go on. Do not injure, if you cannot render help ... take man where he stands, and from there give him a lift.... What can you and I do ? Do you think you can teach even a child ? You cannot. The child teaches himself.[1]

The masses—the fountain-head of power

Whether the leadership of society be in the hands of those who monopolize learning or wield the power of riches or arms, the source of its power is always the subject masses. By so much as the class in power severs itself from this source, by so much is it sure to become weak.[2]

Self-love is the first teacher of self-renunciation. For the preservation of the individual's interest only, one looks first to the well-being of the whole. In the interest of one's own nation is one's own interest ; in the well-being of one's own nation is one's own well-being. Without the co-operation of the many, most works can by no means go on—even self-defence becomes an impossibility.[3]

The individual's life is in the life of the whole, the individual's happiness is in the happiness of the whole ; apart from the whole, the individual's existence is inconceivable—this is an eternal truth and is the bed-rock

on which the universe is built. To move slowly towards the infinite whole, bearing a constant feeling of intense sympathy and sameness with it, being happy with its happiness and being distressed in its affliction, is the individual's sole duty.[4]

Ye labouring classes of India

Ye labouring classes of India, as a result of your silent, constant labours Babylon, Persia, Alexandria, Greece, Rome, Venice, Genoa, Baghdad, Samarqand, Spain, Portugal, France, Denmark, Holland, and England have successively attained supremacy and eminence! And you?—Well, who cares to think of you!...your ancestors wrote a few philosophical works, penned a dozen or so epics, or built a number of temples—that is all, and you rend the skies with triumphal shouts; while those whose heart's blood has contributed to all the progress that has been made in the world—well, who cares to praise them? The world-conquering heroes of spirituality, war, and poetry are in the eyes of all, and they have received the homage of mankind. But where nobody looks, no one gives a word of encouragement, where everybody hates—that living amid such circumstances and displaying boundless patience, infinite love, and dauntless practicality, our proletariat are doing their duty in their homes day and night, without the slightest murmur—well, is there no heroism in this? Many turn out to be heroes when they have got some great task to perform. Even a coward easily gives up his life, and the most selfish man behaves disinterestedly, when there is a multitude to cheer them on; but blessed indeed is he who manifests the same unselfishness and devotion to duty in the smallest of acts, unnoticed by all—and it is you who are actually doing this, ye ever-trampled labouring classes of India! I bow to you.[5]

Elevation of the masses

Keep the motto before you—'Elevation of the masses without injuring their religion'.

Remember that the nation lives in the cottage ... the fate of a nation ... depend(s) upon the ... *condition of the masses*. Can you raise them ? Can you give them back their lost individuality without making them lose their innate spiritual nature ?[6]

I consider that the great national sin is the neglect of the masses, and that is one of the causes of our downfall. No amount of politics would be of any avail until the masses in India are once more well educated, well fed, and well cared for. They pay for our education, they build our temples, but in return they get kicks. They are practically our slaves. If we want to regenerate India, we must work for them.[7]

Our mission is for the destitute, the poor, and the illiterate peasantry and labouring classes, and if after everything has been done for them first, there is spare time, then only for the gentry. Those peasants and labouring people will be won over by love.... उद्धरेदात्मनात्मानम्—'One must raise oneself by one's own exertions'—this holds good in all spheres....This moment they will come to understand their own condition and feel the necessity of help and improvement, know that your work is taking effect and is in the right direction....The peasants and labouring classes are in a moribund condition, so what is needed is that the moneyed people will only help them to regain their vitality, and nothing more. Then leave the peasants and labourers to look to their own problem, to grapple with and solve it.[8]

Religion not at fault

Oh, how my heart ached to think of what we think of the poor, the low, in India. They have no chance, no escape, no way to climb up. The poor, the low, the sinner in India have no friends, no help.... They sink lower and lower every day.... Thoughtful people within the last few years have seen it, but unfortunately laid it at the door of the Hindu religion, and to them, the only way of bettering is by crushing this grandest religion of the world. Hear

me, my friend, I have discovered the secret through the grace of the Lord. Religion is not in fault. On the other hand, your religion teaches you that every being is only your own self multiplied. But it was the want of practical application, the want of sympathy—the want of heart.... This state of things must be removed, not by destroying religion but by following the great teachings of the Hindu faith, and joining with it the wonderful sympathy of that logical development of Hinduism—Buddhism.[9]

Liberty is the first condition of growth. Your ancestors gave every liberty to the soul, and religion grew. They put the body under every bondage, and society did not grow. The opposite is the case in the West—every liberty to society, none to religion. Now are falling off the shackles from the feet of Eastern society as from those of Western religion.... The West wants every bit of spirituality through social improvement. The East wants every bit of social power through spirituality. Thus it was that the modern reformers saw no way to reform but by first crushing out the religion of India. They tried, and they failed. Why ? Because few of them ever studied their own religion, and not *one ever underwent* the training necessary to understand the *Mother of all religions*. I claim that no destruction of religion is necessary to improve the Hindu society, and that this state of society exists not on account of religion, but because religion has not been applied to society as it should have been. This I am ready to prove from our old books, every word of it. This is what I teach, and this is what we must struggle all our lives to carry out.[10]

Know your past

Out of the past is built the future. Look back, therefore, as far as you can, drink deep of the eternal fountains that are behind, and after that, look forward, march forward and make India brighter, greater, much higher than she ever was. Our ancestors were great. We must first recall that. We must learn the elements of our being, the blood

that courses in our veins ; ... we must build an India yet greater than what she has been.[11]

Nowadays everybody blames those who constantly look back to their past. It is said that so much looking back to the past is the cause of all India's woes. To me, on the contrary, it seems that the opposite is true. So long as they forgot the past, the Hindu nation remained in a state of stupor ; and as soon as they have begun to look into their past, there is on every side a fresh manifestation of life. It is out of this past that the future has to be moulded, this past will become the future.

The more, therefore, the Hindus study the past, the more glorious will be their future, and whoever tries to bring the past to the door of everyone, is a great benefactor to his nation. The degeneration of India came not because the laws and customs of the ancients were bad, but because they were not allowed to be carried to their legitimate conclusions.[12]

The first work that demands our attention is that the most wonderful truths confined in our Upanishads, in our scriptures, in our Puranas must be brought out from the books, brought out from the monasteries, brought out from the forests, brought out from the possession of selected bodies of people, and scattered broadcast all over the land, so that these truths may run like fire all over the country from north to south and east to west, from the Himalayas to Comorin, from Sindh to the Brahmaputra.[13]

Respect for the great men of the country

We have to introduce the worship of the great saints. Those great-souled ones who have realized the eternal truths are to be presented before the people as the ideals to be followed ; as in the case of India—Shri Ramachandra, Shri Krishna, Mahavira, and Shri Ramakrishna, among others. Can you bring in the worship of Shri Ramachandra and Mahavira in this country ? ... spread far and wide the worship of Shri Krishna roaring the Gita out, with the voice of a lion.... We

now mostly need the ideal of a hero with the tremendous spirit of Rajas thrilling through his veins from head to foot—the hero who will dare and die to know the Truth—the hero whose armour is renunciation, whose sword is wisdom.[14]

Religion not to be hurt

Keep the moto before you—'Elevation of the masses without injuring their religion' .... Can you become an occidental of occidentals in your spirit of equality, freedom, work, and energy, and at the same time a Hindu to the very backbone in religious culture and instincts? This is to be done, and *we will do it*.[15]

I claim that no destruction of religion is necessary to improve the Hindu society, and that this state of society exists not on account of religion, but because religion has not been applied to society as it should have been.[16]

In religion lies the vitality of India, and so long as the Hindu race do not forget the great inheritance of their forefathers, there is no power on earth to destroy them.[17]

When the life-blood is strong and pure, no disease germ can live in that body. Our life-blood is spirituality. If it flows clear, if it flows strong and pure and vigorous, everything is right; political, social, any other material defects, even the poverty of the land, will all be cured if that blood is pure.[18]

If you succeed in the attempt to throw off your religion and take up either politics, or society, or any other things as your centre, as the vitality of your national life, the result will be that you will become extinct. To prevent this you must make all and everything work through that vitality of your religion.... Every man has to make his own choice; so has every nation. We made our choice ages ago, and we must abide by it. And, after all, it is not such a bad choice. Is it such a bad choice in this world to think not of matter but of spirit, not of man but of God? That intense faith in another world, that intense hatred for this world, that intense power of renunciation, that intense faith in

God, that intense faith in the immortal soul, is in you. I challenge anyone to give it up. You cannot. You may try to impose upon me by becoming materialists, by talking materialism for a few months, but I know what you are ; if I take you by the hand, back you come as good theists as ever were born. How can you change your nature ?

So every improvement in India requires first of all an upheaval in religion. Before flooding India with socialistic or political ideas, first deluge the land with spiritual ideas.[19]

The Hindu must not give up his religion, but must keep religion within its proper limits and give freedom to society to grow. All the reformers in India made the serious mistake of holding religion accountable for all the horrors of priestcraft and degeneration and went forthwith to pull down the indestructible structure, and what was the result ? Failure ! Beginning from Buddha down to Ram Mohan Roy, everyone made the mistake of holding caste to be a religious institution and tried to pull down religion and caste all together, and failed.[20]

For good or for evil, the religious ideal has been flowing into India for thousands of years ; for good or for evil, the Indian atmosphere has been filled with ideals of religion for shining scores of centuries ; for good or for evil, we have been born and brought up in the very midst of these ideals of religion, till it has entered into our very blood and tingled with every drop in our veins, and has become one with our constitution, become the very vitality of our lives. Can you give such religion up without the rousing of the same energy in reaction, without filling the channel which that mighty river has cut out for itself in the course of thousands of years ? Do you want that the Ganga should go back to its icy bed and begin a new course ? Even if that were possible, it would be impossible for this country to give up her characteristic course of religious life and take up for herself a new career of politics or something else. You can work only under the law of least resistance, and this religious line is the line of

least resistance in India. This is the line of life, this is the line of growth, and this is the line of well-being in India—to follow the track of religion.[21]

I do not mean to say that other things are not necessary. I do not mean to say that political or social improvements are not necessary, but what I mean is this, and I want you to bear it in mind, that they are secondary here and that religion is primary. The Indian mind is first religious, then anything else.[22]

In India, social reform has to be preached by showing how much more spiritual a life the new system will bring; and politics has to be preached by showing how much it will improve the one thing that the nation wants—its spirituality.[23]

Not by religion alone

First bread and then religion.[24]

The present Hindu society is organized only for spiritual men, and hopelessly crushes out everybody else. Why ? Where shall they go who want to enjoy the world a little with its frivolities ? Just as our religion takes in all, so should our society. This is to be worked out by first understanding the true principles of our religion and then applying them to society. This is the slow but sure work to be done.[25]

Yet, perhaps, some sort of materialism, toned down to our own requirements, would be a blessing to many of our brothers who are not yet ripe for the highest truths. This is the mistake made in every country and in every society, and it is a greatly regrettable thing that in India, where it was always understood, the same mistake of forcing the highest truths on people who are not ready for them has been made of late. My method need not be yours.[26]

Material civilization, nay, even luxury, is necessary to create work for the poor. Bread ! Bread ! I do not believe in a God who cannot give me bread here, giving me eternal bliss in heaven ! Pooh ! India is to be raised, the poor are

to be fed, education is to be spread, and the evil of priestcraft is to be removed. No priestcraft, no social tyranny ! More bread, more opportunity for everybody !...

Now this is to be brought about slowly and by only insisting on our religion and giving liberty to society. Root up priestcraft from the old religion, and you get the best religion in the world. Do you understand me ? Can you make a European society with India's religion ? I believe it is possible and must be.[27]

Everything goes to show that Socialism or some form of rule by the people, call it what you will, is coming on the boards. The people will certainly want the satisfaction of their material needs, less work, no oppression, no war, more food. What guarantee have we that this or any civilization will last, unless it is based on religion, on the goodness of man ?[28]

★★★★★

Uplift of women

The uplift of the women, the awakening of the masses must come first, and then only can any real good come about for the country, for India.[29]

All nations have attained greatness by paying proper respect to women. That country and that nation which do not respect women have never become great, nor will ever be in future.[30]

★★★★★

Education—the primary need

Education, education, education alone ! Travelling through many cities of Europe and observing in them the comforts and education of even the poor people, there was brought to my mind the state of our own poor people, and I used to shed tears. What made the difference ? Education was the answer I got. Through education comes faith in one's own self, and through faith in one's own self the inherent Brahman is waking up in them, while the Brahman in us is gradually becoming dormant.[31]

The only service to be done for our lower classes is to give them education, *to develop their lost individuality*....

They are to be given ideas ; their eyes are to be opened to what is going on in the world around them ; and then they will work out their own salvation. Every nation, every man, and every woman must work out their own salvation. Give them ideas—that is the only help they require, and then the rest must follow as the effect. Ours is to put the chemicals together, the crystallization comes in the law of nature. Our duty is to put ideas into their heads, they will do the rest. This is what is to be done in India.[32]

It takes time, quite a long time, to make a healthy, strong, public opinion which will solve its own problems ; and in the interim we shall have to wait. The whole problem of social reform, therefore, resolves itself into this : where are those who want reform ? Make them first.... A few men who think that certain things are evil will not make a nation move.... First educate the nation.... Therefore, even for social reform, the first duty is to educate the people, and you will have to wait till that time comes.[33]

A nation is advanced in proportion as education and intelligence spread among the masses. The chief cause of India's ruin has been the monopolizing of the whole education and intelligence of the land, by dint of pride and royal authority, among a handful of men. If we are to rise again, we shall have to do it in the same way, i.e. by spreading education among the masses.[34]

Education for self-reliance

All the wealth of the world cannot help one little Indian village if the people are not taught to help themselves. Our work should be mainly *educational*, both moral and intellectual.[35]

Multi-dimensional exchange of ideas—a must

Give and take is the law, and if India wants to raise herself once more, it is absolutely necessary that she brings out her treasures and throws them broadcast

among the nations of the earth, and in return be ready to receive what others have to give her. Expansion is life, contraction is death. Love is life and hatred is death. We commenced to die the day we began to hate other races, and nothing can prevent our death unless we come back to expansion, which is life.

We must mix, therefore, with all the races of the earth. And every Hindu that goes out to travel in foreign parts renders more benefit to his country than hundreds of men who are bundles of superstitions and selfishness.[36]

India's doom was sealed the very day they invented the word *mlechchha* and stopped from communion with others.[37]

One of the great causes of India's misery and downfall has been that she narrowed herself, went into her shell as the oyster does, and refused to give her jewels and her treasures to the other races of mankind, refused to give the life-giving truths to thirsting nations outside the Aryan fold. That has been the one great cause ; that we did not go out, that we did not compare notes with other nations.... Therefore we must go out, and the secret of life is to give and take. Are we to take always, to sit at the feet of the Westerners to learn everything, even religion ? We can learn mechanism from them. We can learn many other things. But we have to teach them something, and that is our religion, that is our spirituality. For a complete civilization the world is waiting, waiting for the treasures to come out of India, waiting for the marvellous spiritual inheritance of the race, which, through decades of degradation and misery, the nation has still clutched to her breast. The world is waiting for that treasure ; little do you know how much of hunger and of thirst there is outside of India for these wonderful treasures of our forefathers.... Therefore we must go out, exchange our spirituality for anything they have to give us ; for the marvels of the region of spirit we will exchange the marvels of the region of matter. We will not be students always, but teachers also. There cannot be friendship

without equality, and there cannot be equality when one party is always the teacher and the other party sits always at his feet. If you want to become equal with the Englishman or the American, you will have to teach as well as to learn, and you have plenty yet to teach to the world for centuries to come.[38]

What we want are Western science coupled with Vedanta, Brahmacharya as the guiding motto, and also Shraddha and faith in one's own self.... What we need, you know, is to study, independent of foreign control, different branches of the knowledge that is our own, and with it the English language and Western science ; we need technical education and all else that may develop industries so that men, instead of seeking for service, may earn enough to provide for themselves.[39]

Can you become an occidental of occidentals in your spirit of equality, freedom, work, and energy, and at the same time a Hindu to the very backbone in religious culture and instincts ?[40]

As Western ideas of organization and external civilization are penetrating and pouring into our country, whether we will have them or not, so Indian spirituality and philosophy are deluging the lands of the West. None can resist it, and no more can we resist some sort of material civilization from the West. A little of it, perhaps, is good for us, and a little spiritualization is good for the West ; thus the balance will be preserved. It is not that we ought to learn everything from the West, or that they have to learn everything from us.[41]

A poor man's life is hemmed in and bound down by tremendous spiritual and ethical laws for which he has no use. Hands off ! Let the poor fellow enjoy himself a little, and then he will raise himself up, and renunciation will come to him of itself. Perhaps in this line, we can be taught something by the Western people ; but we must be very cautious in learning these things. I am sorry to say that most of the examples one meets nowadays of men who have imbibed the Western ideas are more or less

failures. There are two great obstacles on our path in India, the Scylla of old orthodoxy and the charybdis of modern European civilization. Of these two, I vote for the old orthodoxy, and not for the Europeanized system.[42]

There is a great danger—lest by this huge wave of Western spirit are washed away all our most precious jewels, earned through ages of hard labour ; true, there is fear lest falling into its strong whirlpool, even the land of Bharata forgets itself so far as to be turned into a battlefield in the struggle after earthly enjoyments ; ay, there is fear, too, lest going to imitate the impossible and impracticable foreign ways, rooting out as they do our national customs and ideals, we lose all that we hold dear in this life and be undone in the next !

To avoid these calamities we must always keep the wealth of our own home before our eyes, so that everyone down to the masses may always know and see what his own ancestral property is. We must exert ourselves to do that ; and side by side, we should be brave to open our doors to receive all available light from outside. Let rays of light come in, in sharp-driving showers from the four quarters of the earth ; let the intense flood of light flow in from the West—what of that ? Whatever is weak and corrupt is liable to die—what are we to do with it ? If it goes, let it go, what harm does it do to us ? What is strong and invigorating is immortal. Who can destroy that ?[43]

Have we to learn anything else, have we to learn anything from the world ? We have, perhaps, to gain a little in material knowledge, in the power of organization, in the ability to handle powers, organizing powers, in bringing the best results out of the smallest of causes. This perhaps to a certain extent we may learn from the West. But if any one preaches in India the ideal of eating and drinking and making merry, if any one wants to apotheosise the material world into a God, that man is a liar ; he has no place in this holy land, the Indian mind does not want to listen to him.[44]

Do you know what my idea is ? By preaching the

profound secrets of the Vedanta religion in the Western world, we shall attract the sympathy and regard of these mighty nations, maintaining forever the position of their teacher in spiritual matters, and they will remain our teachers in all material concerns. The day when, surrendering the spiritual into their hands, our countrymen would sit at the feet of the West to learn religion, that day indeed the nationality of this fallen nation will be dead and gone for good. Nothing will come of crying day and night before them, 'Give me this or give me that.' When there will grow a link of sympathy and regard between both nations by this give-and-take intercourse, there will be then no need for these noisy cries. They will do everything of their own accord. I believe that by this cultivation of religion and the wider diffusion of Vedanta, both this country and the West will gain enormously. To me the pursuit of politics is a secondary means in comparison with this. I will lay down my life to carry out this belief practically. If you believe in any other way of accomplishing the good of India, well, you may go on working your own way.[45]

India has to learn from Europe the conquest of external nature, and Europe has to learn from India the conquest of internal nature. Then there will be neither Hindus nor Europeans—there will be the ideal humanity which has conquered both the nature, the external and the internal. We have developed one phase of humanity, and they another. It is the union of the two that is wanted.[46]

A new India on Indian traditions

To the reformers I will point out that I am a greater reformer than any one of them. They want to reform only little bits. I want root-and-branch reform. Where we differ is in the method. Theirs is the method of destruction, mine is that of construction. I do not believe in reform ; I believe in growth. I do not dare to put myself in the position of God and dictate to our society, 'This way thou shouldst move and not that.' I simply want to be like the squirrel in

the building of Ramas bridge, who was quite content to put on the bridge his little quota of sand-dust.... This wonderful national machine has worked through ages, this wonderful river of national life is flowing before us. Who knows, and who dares to say, whether it is good and how it shall move ? ...Feed the national life with the fuel it wants, but the growth is its own ; none can dictate its growth to it. Evils are plentiful in our society, but so are there evils in every other society.... Why condemn ? ...Everybody can show what evil is, but he is the friend of mankind who finds a way out of the difficulty....

Did India ever stand in want of reformers ? Do you read the history of India ? Who was Ramanuja ? Who was Shankara ? Who was Nanak ? Who was Chaitanya ? Who was Kabir ? Who was Dadu ? Who were all these great preachers, one following the other, a galaxy of stars of the first magnitude ?... They all tried, and their work is still going on. The difference is this. They had not the fanfaronade of the reformers of today ; they had no curses on their lips as modern reformers have ; their lips pronounced only blessings. They never condemned. ...They did not say, 'You have been wicked, now let us be good.' They said, 'You have been good, but let us now be better.' That makes a whole world of difference. We must grow according to our nature. Vain is it to attempt the lines of action that foreign societies have engrafted upon us ; it is impossible. Glory unto God, that it is impossible, that we cannot be twisted and tortured into the shape of other nations. I do not condemn the institutions of other races ; they are good for them, but not for us. What is meat for them may be poison for us. This is the first lesson to learn. With other sciences, other institutions, and other traditions behind them, they have got their present system. We, with our traditions, with thousands of years of Karma behind us, naturally can only follow our own bent, run in our own grooves ; and that we shall have to do.[47]

We need a band of fiery patriots

I heard in Japan that it was the belief of the girls of that country that their dolls would be animated if they were loved with all their heart. The Japanese girl never breaks her doll. ...I too believe that India will awake again if anyone could love with all his heart the people of the country—bereft of the grace of affluence, of blasted fortune, their discretion totally lost, downtrodden, ever-starved, quarrelsome, and envious. Then only will India awake, when hundreds of large-hearted men and women, giving up all desires of enjoying the luxuries of life, will long and exert themselves to their utmost, for the well-being of the millions of their countrymen who are gradually sinking lower and lower in the vortex of destitution and ignorance.[48]

Be patriots, love the race which has done such great things for us in the past.[49]

Feel, therefore, my would-be reformers, my would-be patriots ! Do you feel ? Do you feel that millions and millions of the descendants of gods and of sages have become next-door neighbours to brutes ? Do you feel that millions are starving today, and millions have been starving for ages ? Do you feel that ignorance has come over the land as a dark cloud ? Does it make you restless ? Does it make you sleepless ? Has it gone into your blood, coursing through your veins, becoming consonant with your heartbeats ? Has it made you almost mad ? ...That is the first step to become a patriot, the very first step.... You may feel, then ; but instead of spending your energies in frothy talk, have you found any way out, any practical solution, some help instead of condemnation, some sweet words to soothe their miseries, to bring them out of this living death ? Yet that is not all. Have you got the will to surmount mountain-high obstructions ? If the whole world stands against you sword in hand, would you still dare to do what you think is right ? If your wives and children are against you, if all your money goes, your name dies, your wealth vanishes, would you still stick to

it ? Would you still pursue it and go on steadily towards your own goal ? ...Have you got that steadfastness ? If you have these three things, each one of you will work miracles.[50]

To the pioneers of the nation-building

Train up a band of fiery young men. Put your fire in them and gradually increase the organization, letting it widen and widen its circle.[51]

My faith is in the younger generation, the modern generation, out of them will come my workers. They will work out the whole problem, like lions.[52]

My Brave Boys ... nothing else is necessary but these—*Love, Sincerity, and Patience*. What is life but growth, i.e. expansion, i.e. *love* ? Therefore all love is life, it is the only law of life, all selfishness is *death*, and this is true here or hereafter. Even if there is no hereafter, it is life to do good, it is death not to do good to others. Ninety percent of human brutes you see are dead, are *ghosts*—for none lives, my boys, but he who loves. Feel, my children, feel ; feel for the poor, the ignorant, the downtrodden, feel till the heart stops and the brain reels and you think you will go mad—then pour the soul out at the feet of the Lord and then will come power, help, and indomitable energy. Struggle, struggle was my motto for the last ten years. Struggle, still say I. When it was all dark I used to say, struggle, when light is breaking in, I still say, struggle. Be not afraid, my children. Look not up in that attitude of fear towards that infinite starry vault as if it would crush you. Wait ! In a few hours more the whole of it will be under your feet. Wait, money does not pay, nor name ; fame does not pay, nor learning. It is love that pays ; it is character that cleaves its way through adamantine walls of difficulties.[53]

Trust not to the so-called rich, they are more dead than alive. The hope lies in you—in the meek, the lowly, but the faithful. Have faith in the Lord ; no policy, it is nothing. Feel for the miserable and look up for help—it

shall come. I have travelled twelve years with this load in my heart and this idea in my head. I have gone from door to door of the so-called rich and great. With a bleeding heart I have crossed half the world to this strange land, seeking for help. The Lord is great. I know He will help me. I may perish of cold or hunger in this land, but I bequeath to you, young men, this sympathy, this struggle for the poor, the ignorant, the oppressed. Go now this minute to the temple of Parthasarathi, and before Him who was friend to the poor and lowly cowherds of Gokula, who never shrank to embrace the Pariah Guhaka, who accepted the invitation of a prostitute in preference to that of the nobles and saved her in His incarnation as Buddha—yea, down on your faces before Him, and make a great sacrifice, the sacrifice of a whole life for them, for whom He comes from time to time, whom He loves above all, the poor, the lowly, the oppressed. Vow, then, to devote your whole lives to the cause of the redemption of these three hundred millions, going down and down every day.... Do not look up to the so-called rich and great; do not care for the heartless intellectual writers, and their cold-blooded newspaper articles. Faith, sympathy—fiery faith and fiery sympathy! Life is nothing, death is nothing, hunger nothing, cold nothing. Glory unto the Lord—march on, the Lord is our General. Do not look back to see who falls—forward—onward! Thus and thus we shall go on, brethren. One falls, and another takes up the work.[54]

The keynote—renunciation and service

Our method is very easily described. It simply consists in reasserting the national life. Buddha preached *renunciation*. India heard, and yet in six centuries she reached her greatest height. The secret lies there. The national ideals of India are RENUNCIATION and SERVICE. Intensify her in those channels, and the rest will take care of itself.[55]

Self-reliance and self-respect

The great thing is to have faith in oneself, even before faith in God ; but the difficulty seems to be that we are losing faith in ourselves day by day. That is my objection against the reformers.[56]

What we want is this Shraddha. Unfortunately, it has nearly vanished from India, and this is why we are in our present state. What makes the difference between man and man is the difference in this Shraddha and nothing else. What makes one man great and another weak and low is this Shraddha. My Master used to say, he who thinks himself weak will become weak, and that is true. This Shraddha must enter into you. Whatever of material power you see manifested by the Western races is the outcome of this Shraddha, because they believe in their muscles, and if you believe in your spirit, how much more will it work ![57]

In addition—the intense spirit of activity

We want that energy, that love of independence, that spirit of self-reliance, that immovable fortitude, that dexterity in action, that bond of unity of purpose, that thirst for improvement. Checking a little the constant looking back to the past, we want that expansive vision infinitely projected forward ; and we want—that intense spirit of activity (Rajas) which will flow through our every vein, from head to foot.[58]

Three things are necessary to make every man great, every nation great :

1. Conviction of the powers of goodness.
2. Absence of jealousy and suspicion.
3. Helping all who are trying to be and do good.[59]

The faculty of organization is entirely absent in our nature, but this has to be infused. The great secret is—absence of jealousy. Be always ready to concede to the opinions of your brethren, and try always to conciliate. That is the whole secret.[60]

It is absolutely necessary for you, ... to learn from the Englishman the idea of prompt obedience to leaders, the absence of jealousy, the indomitable perseverance and the undying faith in himself. As soon as he selects a leader for a work, the Englishman sticks to him through thick and thin and obeys him. Here in India, everybody wants to become a leader, and there is nobody to obey. Everyone should learn to obey before he can command. There is no end to our jealousies.... Until this absence of jealousy and obedience to leaders are learnt ... there will be no power of organization. We shall have to remain the hopelessly confused mob that we are now, hoping and doing nothing.[61]

I hope that every one of us here will have breadth enough, and at the same time faith enough.... I want the intensity of the fanatic plus the extensity of the materialist. Deep as the ocean, broad as the infinite skies, that is the sort of heart we want. Let us be as progressive as any nation that ever existed, and at the same time as faithful and conservative towards our traditions.[62]

The labouring classes will rise

Human society is in turn governed by the four castes—the priests, the soldiers, the traders, and the labourers. Each state has its glories as well as its defects. When the priest (Brahmin) rules, there is a tremendous exclusiveness on hereditary grounds ; the persons of the priests and their descendants are hemmed in with all sorts of safe-guards—none but they have any knowledge—none but they have the right to impart that knowledge. Its glory is that at this period is laid the foundation of sciences. The priests cultivate the mind, for through the mind they govern.

The military (Kshatriya) rule is tyrannical and cruel, but they are not exclusive ; and during that period arts and social culture attain their height.

The commercial (Vaishya) rule comes next. It is awful in its silent crushing and blood-sucking power. Its

advantage is, as the trader himself goes everywhere, he is a good disseminator of ideas collected during the two previous states. They are still less exclusive than the military, but culture begins to decay.

Last will come the labourer (Shudra) rule. Its advantages will be the distribution of physical comforts—its disadvantages, (perhaps) the lowering of culture. There will be a great distribution of ordinary education, but extraordinary geniuses will be less and less....

Yet the first three have had their day. Now is the time for the last—they must have it—none can resist it.[63]

A time will come when there will be the rising of the Shudra class, *with their Shudra-hood* ; that is to say, not like that as at present, when the Shudras are becoming great by acquiring the characteristic qualities of the Vaishya or the Kshatriya, ... the Shudras of every country, with their inborn Shudra nature and habits—not becoming in essence Vaishya or Kshatriya, but remaining as Shudras—will gain absolute supremacy in every society. The first glow of the dawn of this new power has already begun to break slowly upon the Western world, and the thoughtful are at their wits end to reflect upon the final issue of this fresh phenomenon. Socialism, Anarchism, Nihilism,* and other like sects are the vanguard of the social revolution that is to follow.[64]

Dont you see, I can see through the veil, the shadow of coming events of the world. By Gods grace it has descended on me, this insight of mine, through years of close observation. Study and travel that is *Sadhana*. As the astronomers see the movements of the stars through telescope, likewise the movement of the world falls within the range of my vision. You take it from me, this rising of the *Sudras* will take place first in *Russia*, and then in *China*. *India* will rise next and will play a vital role in shaping the future world.[65]

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* Socialism took its birth in 1835 A.D. The initiator of Anarchism was Bakunin, who was born in 1814 A.D. Nihilism was first inaugurated in Russia in 1862.

If it is possible to form a state in which the knowledge of the priest period, the culture of the military, the distributive spirit of the commercial, and the ideal of equality of the last can all be kept intact, minus their evils, it will be an ideal state. But is it possible ?...

The other systems have been tried and found wanting. Let this one be tried—if for nothing else, for the novelty of the thing. A redistribution of pain and pleasure is better than always the same persons having pains and pleasures. The sum total of good and evil in the world remains ever the same. The yoke will be lifted from shoulder to shoulder by new systems, that is all.[66]

New India

Let New India arise.... Let her arise—out of the peasants' cottage, grasping the plough ; out of the huts of the fisherman, the cobbler, and the sweeper. Let her spring from the grocer's shop, from beside the oven of the fritter-seller. Let her emanate from the factory, from marts, and from markets. Let her emerge from groves and forests, from hills and mountains. These common people have suffered oppression for thousands of years—suffered it without murmur, and as a result have got wonderful fortitude. They have suffered eternal misery, which has given them unflinching vitality. Living on a handful of grain, they can convulse the world ; give them only half a piece of bread, and the whole world will not be big enough to contain their energy ; they are endowed with the inexhaustible vitality of a Raktabija.* And, besides, they have got the wonderful strength that comes of a pure and moral life, which is not to be found anywhere else in the world.

Such peacefulness, such contentment, such love, such power of silent and incessant work, and such manifestation of lion's strength in times of action—where

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* A demon, in the *Durga-Saptashati*, every drop of whose blood falling on the ground produced another demon like him.

else will you find these ! Skeletons of the Past, there, before you, are your successors, the India that is to be.[67]

India—the focus of the day

Shall India die ? Then from the world all spirituality will be extinct, all moral perfection will be extinct, all sweet-souled sympathy for religion will be extinct, all ideality will be extinct ; and in its place will reign the duality of lust and luxury as the male and female deities, with money as its priest, fraud, force, and competition its ceremonies, and the human soul its sacrifice. Such a thing can never be. The power of suffering is infinitely greater than the power of doing ; the power of love is infinitely of greater potency than the power of hatred.[68]

The longest night seems to be passing away, the sorest trouble seems to be coming to an end at last, the seeming corpse appears to be awaking and a voice is coming to us—away back where history and even tradition fails to peep into the gloom of the past, coming down from there, reflected as it were from peak to peak of the infinite Himalaya of knowledge, and of love, and of work, India, this motherland of ours—a voice is coming unto us, gentle, firm, and yet unmistakable in its utterances, and is gaining volume as days pass by, and behold, the sleeper is awakening ! Like a breeze from the Himalayas, it is bringing life into the almost dead bones and muscles, the lethargy is passing away, and only the blind cannot see, or the perverted will not see, that she is awakening, this motherland of ours, from her deep long sleep. None can resist her any more ; never is she going to sleep any more ; no outward powers can hold her back any more.[69]

There were many good things in the ancient times, but there were bad things too. The good things are to be retained, but the India that is to be, the future India, must be much greater than ancient India.[70]

The past was great no doubt, but I sincerely believe that the future will be more glorious still.[71]

India will be raised, not with the power of the flesh,

but with the power of the spirit; not with the flag of destruction, but with the flag of peace and love, the garb of the Sannyasin; not by the power of wealth, but by the power of the begging-bowl.... But one vision I see clear as life before me, that the ancient Mother has awakened once more, sitting on her throne—rejuvenated, more glorious than ever. Proclaim Her to all the world with the voice of peace and benediction.[72]

There have been great conquering races in the world. We also have been great conquerors. The story of our conquest has been described by that noble Emperor of India, Asoka, as the conquest of religion and of spirituality. Once more the world must be conquered by India. This is the dream of my life.... This is the great ideal before us, and every one must be ready for it—the conquest of the whole world by India—nothing less than that, and we must all get ready for it, strain every nerve for it.... Up, India, and conquer the world with your spirituality! Ay, as has been declared on this soil first, love must conquer hatred, hatred cannot conquer itself. Materialism and all its miseries can never be conquered by materialism. Armies when they attempt to conquer armies only multiply and make brutes of humanity. Spirituality must conquer the West. Slowly they are finding out that what they want is spirituality to preserve them as nations. They are waiting for it, they are eager for it. Where is the supply to come from? Where are the men ready to go out to every country in the world with the messages of the great sages of India? Where are the men who are ready to sacrifice everything, so that this message shall reach every corner of the world? Such heroic souls are wanted to help the spread of truth. Such heroic workers are wanted to go abroad and help to disseminate the great truths of the Vedanta. The world wants it; without it the world will be destroyed. The whole of the Western world is on a volcano which may burst tomorrow, go to pieces tomorrow. They have searched every corner of the world and have found no respite. They

have drunk deep of the cup of pleasure and found it vanity. Now is the time to work so that India's spiritual ideas may penetrate deep into the West.... We must go out, we must conquer the world through our spirituality and philosophy. There is no other alternative, we must do it or die.[73]

Once in far remote antiquity, the Indian philosophy, coming in contact with Greek energy, led to the rise of the Persian, the Roman, and other great nations. After the invasion of Alexander the great, these too great waterfalls colliding with each other, deluged nearly half of the globe with spiritual tides, such as Christianity. Again, a similar commingling, resulting in the improvement and prosperity of Arabia, laid the foundation of modern European civilization. And perhaps, in our own day, such a time for the conjunction of these two gigantic forces has presented itself again. This time their centre is India.[74]

EDUCATION—THE PANACEA

Knowledge—inherent in man

What we say a man 'knows', should, in strict psychological language, be what he 'discovers' or 'unveils'; what a man 'learns' is really what he 'discovers', by taking the cover off his own soul, which is a mine of infinite knowledge.

We say Newton discovered gravitation. Was it sitting anywhere in a corner waiting for him ? It was in his own mind ; the time came and he found it out. All knowledge that the world has ever received comes from the mind ; the infinite library of the universe is in your own mind. The external world is simply the suggestion, the occasion, which sets you to study your own mind, but the object of your study is always your own mind. The falling of an apple gave the suggestion to Newton, and he studied his own mind. He rearranged all the previous links of thought in his mind and discovered a new link among them, which we call the law of gravitation. It was not in the apple nor in anything in the centre of the earth.

All knowledge, therefore, secular or spiritual, is in the human mind. In many cases it is not discovered, but remains covered, and when the covering is being slowly taken off, we say, 'We are learning', and the advance of knowledge is made by the advance of this process of uncovering. The man from whom this veil is being lifted is the more knowing man, the man upon whom it lies thick is ignorant, and the man from whom it has entirely gone is all-knowing, omniscient. There have been omniscient men, and, I believe, there will be yet ; and that there will be myriads of them in the cycles to come.[1]

The essence of education

Education is the manifestation of the perfection already in man.... Therefore the only duty of the teacher ... is to remove all obstructions from the way.[2]

The true education, however, is not yet conceived of amongst us.... I never define anything.... Still, it may be described as a development of faculty, not an accumulation of words, or as a training of individuals to will rightly and efficiently.[3]

The huge steamer, the mighty railway engine—they are non-intelligent, they move, turn, and run ; but they are without intelligence. And yonder tiny worm which moved away from the railway line to save its life, why is it intelligent ? There is no manifestation of will in the machine, the machine never wishes to transgress law ; the worm wants to oppose law, rises against law whether it succeeds or not, therefore it is intelligent. Greater is the happiness, higher is the Jiva, in proportion as this will is more successfully manifest. The will of God is perfectly fruitful, therefore He is the highest.

What is education ? Is it book-learning ? No. Is it diverse knowledge ? Not even that. The training by which the current and expression of will are brought under control and become fruitful is called education. Now consider, is that education as a result of which the will, being continuously choked by force through generations, is well-nigh killed out ; is that education under whose sway even the old ideas, let alone the new ones, are disappearing one by one ; is that education which is slowly making man a machine ? It is more blessed, in my opinion, even to go wrong impelled by one's free will and intelligence than to be good as an automaton.[4]

Education is not filling the mind with a lot of facts. Perfecting the instrument and getting complete mastery of my own mind [is the ideal of education].[5]

To me the very essence of education is concentration of mind, not the collecting of facts. If I had to do my education over again, and had any voice in the matter, I

would not study facts at all. I would develop the power of concentration and detachment, and then with a perfect instrument I could collect facts at will. Side by side, in the child, should be developed the power of concentration and detachment.[6]

Education is not the amount of information that is put into your brain and runs riot there, undigested, all your life. We must have life-building, man-making, character-making assimilation of ideas. If you have assimilated five ideas and made them your life and character, you have more education than any man who has got by heart a whole library....If education is identical with information, the libraries are the greatest sages in the world, and encyclopaedias are the Rishis.[7]

We want that education by which character is formed, strength of mind is increased, the intellect is expanded, and by which one can stand on one's own feet.[8]

The education which does not help the common mass of people to equip themselves for the struggle for life, which does not bring out strength of character, a spirit of philanthropy, and the courage of a lion—is it worth the name? Real education is that which enables one to stand on one's own legs.[9]

Another thing that we want is the abolition of that system which aims at educating our boys in the same manner as that of the man who battered his ass, being advised that it could thereby be turned into a horse ... no one can teach anybody. The teacher spoils everything by thinking that he is teaching. Thus Vedanta says that within man is all knowledge—even in a boy it is so—and it requires only an awakening and that much is the work of a teacher. We have to do only so much for the boys that they may learn to apply their own intellect to the proper use of their hands, legs, ears, eyes, etc. and finally everything will become easy.[10]

Hands off! as I always say, and everything will be right. That is, our duty is to clear the way.[11]

Do not try to disturb the faith of any man. If you can

give him something better ; if you can, get hold of a man where he stands and give him a push upwards ; do so, but do not destroy what he has. The only true teacher is he who can convert himself, as it were, into a thousand persons at a moment's notice. The only true teacher is he who can immediately come down to the level of the student, and transfer his soul to the student's soul and see through the student's eyes and hear through his ears and understand through his mind. Such a teacher can really teach and none else. All these negative, breaking-down, destructive teachers that are in the world, can never do any good.[12]

A close personal contact between the teacher and the taught

My idea of education is personal contact with the teacher—Gurugriha-Vasa. Without the personal life of a teacher there would be no education. Take your Universities. What have they done during the fifty years of their existence ? They have not produced one original man. They are merely an examining body. The idea of the sacrifice for the common weal is not yet developed in our nation.[13]

One should live from his very boyhood with one whose character is like a blazing fire and should have before him a living example of the highest teaching. Mere reading that it is a sin to tell a lie will be of no use. Every boy should be trained to practise absolute Brahmacharya, and then, and then only, faith—Shraddha—will come. Otherwise, why will not one who has no Shraddha speak an untruth ? In our country, the imparting of knowledge has always been through men of renunciation....India had all good prospects so long as Tyagis (men of renunciation) used to impart knowledge.[14]

Education and religion

I look upon religion as the innermost core of education.[15]

The root is religion. Religion is as the rice, and everything else, like the curries. Taking only curries causes indigestion, and so is the case with taking rice alone.[16]

After preaching spiritual knowledge, along with it will come that secular knowledge and every other knowledge that you want; but if you attempt to get the secular knowledge without religion, I tell you plainly, vain is your attempt in India, it will never have a hold on the people.[17]

Swamiji's plan about religion-centred education

We must have a temple, for with Hindus religion must come first. Then, you may say, all sects will quarrel about it. But we will make it a non-sectarian temple, having only 'Om' as the symbol, the greatest symbol of any sect. If there is any sect here which believes that 'Om' ought not to be the symbol, it has no right to call itself Hindu. All will have the right to interpret Hinduism, each one according to his own sect ideas, but we must have a common temple. You can have your own images and symbols in other places, but do not quarrel here with those who differ from you. Here should be taught the common grounds of our different sects, and at the same time the different sects should have perfect liberty to come and teach their doctrines, with only one restriction, that is, not to quarrel with other sects. Say what you have to say, the world wants it; but the world has no time to hear what you think about other people; you can keep that to yourselves.

Secondly, in connection with this temple there should be an institution to train teachers who must go about preaching religion and giving secular education to our people; they must carry both. As we have been already carrying religion from door to door, let us along with it carry secular education also. That can be easily done. Then the work will extend through these bands of teachers and preachers, and gradually we shall have similar temples in

other places, until we have covered the whole of India. That is my plan.[18]

Not negative—positive education

We must give the public only positive ideas. Negative thoughts weaken men. Do you not find that where parents are constantly taxing their sons to read and write, telling them they will never learn anything, and calling them fools and so forth, the latter do actually turn out to be so in many cases ? If you speak kind words to boys and encourage them, they are bound to improve in time.... If you can give them positive ideas, people will grow up to be men and learn to stand on their own legs. In language and literature, in poetry and the arts, in everything we must point out not the mistakes that people are making in their thoughts and actions, but the way in which they will gradually be able to do these things better. Pointing out mistakes wounds a man's feelings. We have seen how Shri Ramakrishna would encourage even those whom we considered as worthless and change the very course of their lives thereby ! His very method of teaching was a unique phenomenon.[19]

In New York I used to observe the Irish colonists come—downtrodden, haggard-looking, destitute of all possessions at home, penniless, and wooden-headed—with their only belongings, a stick and a bundle of rags hanging at the end of it, fright in their steps, alarm in their eyes. A different spectacle in six months—the man walks upright ; his attire is changed. In his eyes and steps there is no more sign of fright. What is the cause ? Our Vedanta says that that Irishman was kept surrounded by contempt in his own country—the whole of Nature was telling him with one voice—'Pat, you have no more hope, you were born a slave and will remain so'. Having been thus told from his birth, Pat believed in it and hypnotised himself that he was very low, and the Brahman in him shrank away. While no sooner had he landed in America than the shout went up on all sides—'Pat, you are a man as we are,

it is man who has done all, a man like you and me can do everything ; have courage !' Pat raised his head and saw that it was so, the Brahman within woke up, Nature herself spoke, as it were, 'Arise, awake, etc.' (Kath Up, I/iii/4).

Likewise the education that our boys receive is very negative. The schoolboy learns nothing, but has everything of his own broken down—want of Shraddha (faith) is the result. The Shraddha which is the keynote of the Vedas and the Vedanta—the Shraddha which emboldened Nachiketa to face Yama and question him, through which Shraddha this world moves—the annihilation of that Shraddha ! ...Therefore are we so near destruction. The remedy now is, the spread of education. First of all, Self-knowledge. I do not mean thereby, matted hair, staff, Kamandalu, and mountain caves which the word suggests. What do I mean then ? ... Dualist, qualified Monist, Monist, Shaiva, Vaishnava, Shakta, even the Buddhist and the Jain and others—whatever sects have arisen in India are all at one in this respect, that infinite power is latent in this Jivatma (individualised soul) ; ... there is the same Atman in all, the difference being only in manifestation.... That power manifests as soon as it gets the opportunity and the right place and time. From the highest God to the meanest grass, the same power is present in all—whether manifested or not. We shall have to call forth that power by going from door to door.

Secondly, along with this, education has to be imparted.[20]

The old institution of 'living with the Guru' and similar systems of imparting education are needed. What we want are Western science coupled with Vedanta, Brahmacharya as the guiding motto, and also Shraddha and faith in one's own self.[21]

What we need, ... is to study, independent of foreign control, different branches of the knowledge that is our own, and with it the English language and Western science ; we need technical education and all else that may

develop industries so that men, instead of seeking for service, may earn enough to provide for themselves, and save something against a rainy day.[22]

Not that education which inculcates weakness

I have no objection to dualism in many of its forms. I like most of them, but I have objections to every form of teaching which inculcates weakness. This is the one question I put to every man, woman, or child, when they are in physical, mental, or spiritual training. Are you strong ? Do you feel strength ?—for I know it is truth alone that gives strength. I know that truth alone gives life, and nothing but going towards reality will make us strong, and none will reach truth until he is strong. Every system, therefore, which weakens the mind, makes one superstitious, makes one mope, makes one desire all sorts of wild impossibilities, mysteries, and superstitions, I do not like, because its effect is dangerous. Such systems never bring any good ; such things create morbidity in the mind, make it weak, so weak that in course of time it will be almost impossible to receive truth or live upto it.[23]

Self-reliance—our goal

All the wealth of the world cannot help one little Indian village if the people are not taught to help themselves. Our work should be mainly *educational*, both moral and intellectual.... Educate the people, so that they may learn to be self-reliant, frugal, and not given to marrying, and thus save themselves from future famine.[24]

Flaws in the present system

It (present university system) is almost wholly one of defects. Why, it is nothing but a perfect machine for turning out clerks. I would even thank my stars if that were all. But no ! See how men are becoming destitute of Shraddha and faith. They assert that the Gita is only an interpolation, and that the Vedas are but rustic songs ! They like to master every detail concerning things and

nations outside of India, but if you ask them, they do not know even the names of their own forefathers upto the seventh generation, not to speak of the fourteenth !... A nation that has no history of its own has nothing in this world. Do you believe that one who has such faith and pride as to feel, 'I come of noble descent', can ever turn out to be bad ? How could that be ? That faith in himself would curb his actions and feelings, so much so that he would rather die than commit wrong. So a national history keeps a nation well-restrained and does not allow it to sink so low.... Looking from one standpoint you should rather be grateful to the Viceroy* for his proposal of reforming the university system, which means practically abolishing higher education ; the country will, at least, feel some relief by having breathing time. Goodness gracious ! What a fuss and fury about graduating, and after a few days all cools down ! And after all that, what is it they learn but that what religion and customs we have are all bad, and what the Westerners have are all good ! At last, they cannot keep the wolf from the door ! What does it matter if this higher education remains or goes ? It would be better if the people got a little technical education, so that they might find work and earn their bread, instead of dawdling about and crying for service.[25]

The education that you are getting now has some good points, but it has a tremendous disadvantage which is so great that the good things are all weighed down. In the first place it is not a man-making education, it is merely and entirely a negative education. A negative education or any training that is based on negation, is worse than death. The child is taken to school, and the first thing he learns is that his father is a fool, the second thing that his grandfather is a lunatic, the third thing that all his teachers are hypocrites, the fourth that all the sacred

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* Lord Curzon, who took steps to raise the standard of university education so high as to make it very expensive and hence almost inaccessible to boys of the middle classes.

books are lies ! By the time he is sixteen he is a mass of negation, lifeless and boneless. And the result is that fifty years of such education has not produced one original man in the three presidencies. Every man of originality that has been produced has been educated elsewhere, and not in this country, or they have gone to the old universities once more to cleanse themselves of superstitions.[26]

Education can eradicate destitution of the masses

Education, education, education alone ! Travelling through many cities of Europe and observing in them the comforts and education of even the poor people, there was brought to my mind the state of our own poor people, and I used to shed tears. What made the difference ? Education was the answer I got. Through education comes faith in one's own self, and through faith in one's own self the inherent Brahman is waking up in them, while the Brahman in us is gradually becoming dormant.[27]

How can there be any progress of the country without the spread of education, the dawning of knowledge ?... But know for certain that absolutely nothing can be done to improve the state of things, unless there is spread of education first among the women and the masses.... History and the Puranas, housekeeping and the arts, the duties of home-life and principles that make for the development of an ideal character have to be taught with the help of modern science, and the women students must be trained up in ethical and spiritual life.... It is only in the homes of educated and pious mothers that great men are born.[28]

Mass education

Educate and raise the masses, and thus alone a nation is possible.... The whole defect is here : The real nation who live in cottages have forgotten their manhood, their individuality. Trodden under the foot of the Hindu, Mussalman, or Christian, they have come to think that

they are born to be trodden under the foot of everybody who has money enough in his pocket. They are to be given back their lost individuality. They are to be educated.... Our duty is to put the chemicals together, the crystallization will come through God's laws. Let us put ideas into their heads, and they will do the rest. Now this means educating the masses. Here are these difficulties. A pauper government cannot, will not, do anything; so no help from that quarter.

Even supposing we are in a position to open schools in each village free, still the poor boys would rather go to the plough to earn their living than come to your school. Neither have we the money, nor can we make them come to education. The problem seems hopeless. I have found a way out. It is this. If the mountain does not come to Mohammed, Mohammed must go to the mountain. If the poor cannot come to education, education must reach them at the plough, in the factory, everywhere. How? You have seen my brethren. Now I can get hundreds of such, all over India, unselfish, good, and educated. Let these men go from village to village bringing not only religion to the door of everyone but also education. So I have a nucleus of organizing the widows also as instructors to our women.

Now suppose the villagers after their day's work have come to their village and sitting under a tree or somewhere are smoking and talking the time away. Suppose two of these educated Sannyasins get hold of them there and with a camera throw astronomical or other pictures, scenes from different nations, histories, etc. Thus with globes, maps, etc.—and all this orally—how much can be done that way.... It is not that the eye is the only door of knowledge, the ear can do all the same. So they would have ideas and morality and hope for better. Here our work ends. Let them do the rest.[29]

There are thousands of single-minded, self-sacrificing Sannyasins in our own country, going from village to village, teaching religion. If some of them can be

organized as teachers of secular things also, they will go from place to place, from door to door, not only preaching but teaching also. Suppose two of these men go to a village in the evening with a camera, a globe, some maps, etc. They can teach a great deal of astronomy and geography to the ignorant. By telling stories about different nations, they can give the poor a hundred times more information through the ear than they can get in a lifetime through books.[30]

If there is inequality in nature, still there must be equal chance for all—or if greater for some and for some less—the weaker should be given more chance than the strong. In other words, a Brahmin is not so much in need of education as a Chandala. If the son of a Brahmin needs one teacher, that of a Chandala needs ten. For, greater help must be given to him whom nature has not endowed with an acute intellect from birth.[31]

Female education

Religion, arts, science, housekeeping, cooking, sewing, hygiene—the simple essential points in these subjects ought to be taught to our women. It is not good to let them touch novels and fiction.... But only teaching rites of worship won't do ; their education must be an eye-opener in all matters. Ideal characters must always be presented before the view of the girls to imbue them with a devotion to lofty principles of selflessness. The noble examples of Sita, Savitri, Damayanti, Lilavati, Khana, and Mira should be brought home to their minds, and they should be inspired to mould their own lives in the light of these.[32]

But the truth is that some defect or other must creep into that learning or culture which is not founded on a religious basis. But now female education is to be spread with religion as its centre. All other training should be secondary to religion. Religious training, the formation of character and observance of the vow of celibacy—these should be attended to. In the female education which has obtained up till now in India, it is religion that has been made a secondary concern.[33]

Education through colloquial language

In our country, owing to all learning being in Sanskrit from the ancient times, there has arisen an immeasurable gulf between the learned and the common folk. All the great personages, from Buddha down to Chaitanya and Ramakrishna, who came for the well-being of the world, taught the common people in the language of the people themselves. Of course, scholarship is an excellent thing; but cannot scholarship be displayed through any other medium than a language that is stiff and unintelligible, that is unnatural and merely artificial? Is there no room for art in the spoken language? What is the use of creating an unnatural language to the exclusion of the natural one? Do you not think out your scholastic researches in the language which you are accustomed to speak at home? Why then do you introduce such a queer and unwieldy thing when you proceed to put them in black and white? The language in which you think out philosophy and science in your mind, and argue with others in public—is not that the language for writing philosophy and science? If it is not, how then do you reason out those truths within yourselves and in company of others in that very language? The language in which we naturally express ourselves, in which we communicate our anger, grief, or love, etc.—there cannot be a fitter language than that. We must stick to that idea, that manner of expression, that diction and all. No artificial language can ever have that force, and that brevity and expressiveness, or admit of being given any turn you please, as that spoken language. Language must be made like pure steel—turn and twist it any way you like, it is again the same—it cleaves a rock in twain at one stroke, without its edge being turned. Our language is becoming artificial by imitating the slow and pompous movement—and only that—of Sanskrit. And language is the chief means and index of a nation's progress.... Language is the vehicle of ideas. It is the ideas that are of prime importance, language comes after ... language, or art, or

music that expresses no meaning and is lifeless, is of no good. Now they will understand that the more strength is infused into the national life, the more will language, art, and music, etc. become spontaneously instinct with ideas and life. The volume of meaning that a couple of words of everyday use will convey, you may search in vain in two thousand set epithets.[34]

The greatness of a teacher consists in the simplicity of his language.[35]

My ideal of language is my Master's language, most colloquial and yet most expressive.[36]

PROBLEMS OF WOMEN

The ideal of Indian womanhood

O India ! Forget not that the ideal of thy womanhood is Sita, Savitri, Damayanti.[1]

The ideal of womanhood in India is motherhood—that marvellous, unselfish, all-suffering, ever-forgiving mother.[2]

It is unfair to judge women in the east by the western standard. In the west woman is the wife ; in the east she is the mother.[3]

In India the woman was the visible manifestation of God and that her whole life was given up to the thought that she was a mother, and to be a perfect mother she must be chaste.[4]

Our women are not so learned, but they are more pure.

To all women every man save her husband should be as her son. To all men every woman save his own wife should be as his mother. When I look about me and see what you call gallantry, my soul is filled with disgust. Not until you learn to ignore the question of sex and to meet on a ground of common humanity will your women really develop. Until then they are playthings, nothing more. All this is the cause of divorce. Your men bow low and offer a chair, but in another breath they offer compliments. They say, 'Oh, madam, how beautiful are your eyes !' What right have they to do this ? How dare a man venture so far, and how can you women permit it ? Such things develop the less noble side of humanity. They do not tend to nobler ideals.

We should not think that we are men and women, but only that we are human beings, born to cherish and to help one another.[5]

Neglect of women—cause of India's downfall

In India there are two great evils. Trampling on the women, and grinding the poor through caste restrictions.[6]

Here (America) men treat their women as well as can be desired, and hence they are so prosperous, so learned, so free, and so energetic. But why is it that we are slavish, miserable, and dead ? The answer is obvious.[7]

Without Shakti (Power) there is no regeneration for the world. Why is it that our country is the weakest and the most backward of all countries ?—Because Shakti is held in dishonour there.[8]

Unfair to discriminate between the sexes

It is very difficult to understand why in this country so much difference is made between men and women, whereas the Vedanta declares that one and the same conscious Self is present in all beings. You always criticize the women, but say what have you done for their uplift ?[9]

Is there any sex-distinction in Atman (Self) ? Out with the differentiation between man and woman—all is Atman ![10]

Women must be respected

Can you better the condition of your women ? Then there will be hope for your well-being. Otherwise you will remain as backward as you are now.[11]

Do you mean to say that the divinity back of woman can ever be cheated ? It never was and never will be. It always asserts itself. Unfailingly it detects fraud, it detects hypocrisy, unerringly it feels the warmth of truth, the light of spirituality, the holiness of purity. Such purity is absolutely necessary if real spirituality is to be attained.[12]

There is no chance for the welfare of the world unless the condition of woman is improved. It is not possible for a bird to fly on only one wing.

Hence, in the Ramakrishna Incarnation, the acceptance of a woman as the Guru, hence His practising in the

woman's garb and frame of mind,* hence too His preaching the motherhood of women as representations of the Divine Mother.

Hence it is that my first endeavour is to start a Math for women. This Math shall be the origin of Gargis and Maitreyis, and women of even higher attainments than these.[13]

We have seen in Shri Ramakrishna how he had this idea of divine motherhood in every woman, of whatever caste she might be, or whatever might be her worth. It is because I have seen this that I ask you all so earnestly to do likewise and open girls' schools in every village and try to uplift them. If the women are raised, then their children will by their noble actions glorify the name of the country—then will culture, knowledge, power, and devotion awaken in the land.[14]

In what scriptures do you find statements that women are not competent for knowledge and devotion? In the period of degradation, when the priests made the other castes incompetent for the study of the Vedas, they deprived the women also of all their rights. Otherwise you will find that in the Vedic or Upanishadic age Maitreyi, Gargi, and other ladies of revered memory have taken the places of Rishis through their skill in discussing about Brahman. In an assembly of a thousand Brahmanas who were all erudite in the Vedas, Gargi boldly challenged Yajnavalkya in a discussion about Brahman. Since such ideal women were entitled to spiritual knowledge, why shall not the women have the same privilege now? What has happened once can certainly happen again. History repeats itself. All nations have attained greatness by paying proper respect to women. That country and that nation which do not respect women have never become great, nor will ever be in future. The principal reason why your race has so much degenerated

* For some time Shri Ramakrishna dressed himself as a woman and practised Sadhana conceiving himself to be a woman, to get rid of the sex-idea.

is that you have no respect for these living images of Shakti. Manu says, 'Where women are respected, there the gods delight ; and where they are not, there all works and efforts come to naught.' There is no hope of rise for that family or country where there is no estimation of women, where they live in sadness. For this reason, they have to be raised first.[15]

Education can solve women's problems

They (Indian women) have many and grave problems, but none that are not to be solved by that magic word 'education'.[16]

Educate your women first and leave them to themselves ; then they will tell you what reforms are necessary for them.[17]

With such an education women will solve their own problems. They have all the time been trained in helplessness, servile dependence on others, and so they are good only to weep their eyes out at the slightest approach of a mishap or danger. Along with other things they should acquire the spirit of valour and heroism. In the present day it has become necessary for them also to learn self-defence. See how grand was the queen of Jhansi![18]

See that everyone knows something by which she can earn a living, in case of need.[19]

To make a beginning in women's education : our Hindu women easily understand what chastity means, because it is their heritage. Now, first of all, intensify that ideal within them above everything else, so that they may develop a strong character by the force of which, in every stage of their life, whether married, or single if they prefer to remain so, they will not be in the least afraid even to give up their lives rather than flinch an inch from their chastity. Is it little heroism to be able to sacrifice one's life for the sake of one's ideal, whatever that ideal may be ? ...Along with that they should be taught sciences and other things which would be of benefit, not only to them

but to others as well, and knowing this they would easily learn these things and feel pleasure in doing so.[20]

I should very much like our women to have your intellectuality, but not if it must be at the cost of purity.[21]

Sita : the ideal of Indian womanhood

Sita is typical of India—the idealised India. The question is not whether she ever lived, whether the story is history or not, we know that the ideal is there. There is no other Pauranika story that has so permeated the whole nation, so entered into its very life, and has so tingled in every drop of blood of the race, as this ideal of Sita. Sita is the name in India for everything that is good, pure and holy—everything that in woman we call womanly. If a priest has to bless a woman he says, 'Be Sita !' If he blesses a child, he says 'Be Sita !' They are all children of Sita, and are struggling to be Sita, the patient, the all-suffering, the ever-faithful, the ever-pure wife.... Sita was a true Indian by nature ; she never returned injury.[22]

What to speak of Sita ? You may exhaust the literature of the world that is past, and I may assure you that you will have to exhaust the literature of the world of the future, before finding another Sita. Sita is unique ; that character was depicted once and for all. There may have been several Ramas, perhaps, but never more than one Sita ! She is the very type of the true Indian woman, for all the Indian ideals of a perfected woman have grown out of that one life of Sita ; and here she stands these thousands of years, commanding the worship of every man, woman, and child throughout the length and breadth of the land of Aryavarta. There she will always be, this glorious Sita, purer than purity itself, all patience, and all suffering. She who suffered that life of suffering without a murmur, she the ever-chaste and ever-pure wife, she the ideal of the people, the ideal of the gods, the great Sita, our national God she must always remain.... All our mythology may vanish, even our Vedas may depart, and our Sanskrit

language may vanish for ever, but so long as there will be five Hindus living here, even if only speaking the most vulgar patois, there will be the story of Sita present. Mark my words : Sita has gone into the very vitals of our race. She is there in the blood of every Hindu man and woman ; we are all children of Sita. Any attempt to modernize our women, if it tries to take our women away from that ideal of Sita, is immediately a failure, as we see every day. The women of India must grow and develop in the footprints of Sita, and that is the only way.[23]

I know that the race that produced Sita—even if it only dreamt of her—has a reverence for woman that is unmatched on the earth.[24]

The ideal of the modern woman : Sarada Devi

Our Mother is a vast reservoir of spiritual energy, though outwardly calm like the deep ocean. Her advent marks the beginning of a new era in the history of India. The ideals lived and taught by her would not only spiritualize the efforts for the emancipation of women in India but also influence and penetrate into the minds and hearts of women all the world over. Motherhood represented the highest expression of womanhood, especially in India. It is an innate instinct in every woman, the signs of which might be discovered even in a little girl.[25]

With the Holy Mother as the centre of inspiration, a Math is to be established on the eastern bank of the Ganga. As Brahmacharins and Sadhus will be trained in this Math here, so in the other Math also, Brahmacharinis and Sadhvis will be trained.[26]

You have not yet understood the wonderful significance of Mother's life—none of you. But gradually you will know. Without Shakti (Power) there is no regeneration for the world. Why is it that our country is the weakest and the most backward of all countries ?—Because Shakti is held in dishonour there. Mother has been born to revive that wonderful Shakti in India ; and

making her the nucleus, once more will Gargis and Maitreyis be born into the world. Dear brother, you understand little now, but by degrees you will come to know it all. Hence it is her Math that I want first.... Without the grace of Shakti nothing is to be accomplished. What do I find in America and Europe ?—The worship of Shakti, the worship of Power. Yet they worship her ignorantly through sense-gratification. Imagine, then, what a lot of good they will achieve who will worship Her with all purity, in a Sattvika spirit, looking upon Her as their mother ! I am coming to understand things clearer every day, my insight is opening out more and more. Hence we must first build a Math for Mother. First Mother and Mother's daughters, then Father and Father's sons—can you understand this ? ...To me, Mother's grace is a hundred thousand times more valuable than Father's. Mother's grace, Mother's blessings are all paramount to me.... Please pardon me, I am a little bigoted here as regards Mother. If but Mother orders, her demons can work anything. Brother, before proceeding to America I wrote to Mother to bless me. Her blessing came, and at one bound I cleared the ocean. There, you see. In this terrible winter I am lecturing from place to place and fighting against odds, so that funds may be collected for Mother's Math.

Baburam's mother must have lost her sense owing to old age ; and that is why she is about to worship Durga in the earthen image, ignoring the living one. Brother, faith is very difficult to achieve. Brother, I shall show how to worship the living Durga and then only shall I be worthy of my name. I shall be relieved when you will have purchased a plot of land and established there the living Durga, the Mother. Till then I am not returning to my native land. As soon as you can do that, I shall heave a sigh of relief after sending the money. Do you accomplish this festival of Durga of mine by making all the necessary arrangements. Girish Ghosh is adoring the Mother splendidly ; blessed is he, and blessed are his followers.

Brother, often enough, when I am reminded of the Mother, I ejaculate, 'What after all is Rama ?' Brother, that is where my fanaticism lies, I tell you. Of Ramakrishna, you may aver, my brother, that he was an Incarnation or whatever else you may like but fie on him who has no devotion for the mother.[27]

Swamiji's ideas on a monastery for women

There is no hope of rise for that family or country where there is no estimation of women, where they live in sadness. For this reason, they have to be raised first ; and an ideal Math has to be started for them....

I never objected to the worship of women who are the living embodiment of Divine Mother, whose external manifestations, appealing to the senses have maddened men, but whose internal manifestations, such as knowledge, devotion, discrimination and dispassion make man omniscient, of unfailing purpose, and a knower of Brahman. 'सैषा प्रसन्ना वरदा नृणां भवति मुक्तये—She, when pleased, becomes propitious and the cause of the freedom of man (Chandi, 1.57).' Without propitiating the Mother by worship and obeisance, not even Brahma and Vishnu have the power to elude Her grasp and attain to freedom. Therefore for the worship of these family goddesses, in order to manifest the Brahman within them, I shall establish the women's Math....

Even now there are women disciples of Shri Ramakrishna. With their help I shall start this Math. The Holy Mother will be their central figure and the wives and daughters of the devotees of Shri Ramakrishna will be its first inmates. For they will easily appreciate the usefulness of such a Math. After that, following their example, many householders will help in this noble work....

No great work has been done in the world without sacrifice. Who on seeing the tiny sprout of the banyan can imagine that in course of time it will develop into a gigantic banyan tree ? At present I shall start the Math in this way. Later on you will see that after a generation or

two people of the country will appreciate the worth of this Math. My women disciples will lay down their lives for it. Casting off fear and cowardice, you also be helpers in this noble mission and hold this high ideal before all. You will see, it will shed its lustre over the whole country in time....

On the other side of the Ganga a big plot of land will be acquired, where unmarried girls or Brahmacharini widows will live ; devout married women will also be allowed to stay now and then. Men will have no concern with this Math. The elderly Sadhus of the Math will manage the affairs of this Math from a distance. There shall be a girls' school attached to this women's Math, in which religious scriptures, literature, Sanskrit, grammar, and even some amount of English should be taught. Other matters such as sewing, culinary art, rules of domestic work, and upbringing of children, will also be taught while Japa, worship, meditation, etc. shall form an indispensable part of the teaching. Those who will be able to live here permanently, renouncing home and family ties, will be provided with food and clothing from this Math. Those who will not be able to do that will be allowed to study in this Math as day scholars. With the permission of the head of the Math, the latter will be allowed even to stay in the Math occasionally, and during such stay will be maintained by the Math. The elder Brahmacharinis will take charge of the training of the girl students in Brahmacharya. After five or six years' training in this Math, the guardians of the girls may marry them. If deemed fit for Yoga and religious life, with the permission of their guardians they will be allowed to stay in this Math, taking the vow of celibacy. These celibate nuns will in time be the teachers and preachers of the Math. In villages and towns they will open centres and strive for the spread of female education. Through such devout preachers of character there will be the real spread of female education in the country. So long as the students will remain in association with this Math, they must observe Brahmacharya as the basic idea of this Math.

Spirituality, sacrifice, and self-control will be the motto of the pupils of this Math, and service or Seva-dharma the vow of their life. In view of such ideal lives, who will not respect and have faith in them ? If the life of the women of this country be moulded in such fashion, then only will there be the reappearance of such ideal characters as Sita, Savitri and Gargi. To what straits the strictures of local usages have reduced the women of this country, rendering them lifeless and inert, you could understand if only you visited the Western countries. You alone are responsible for this miserable condition of the women, and it rests with you also to raise them again. Therefore I say, set to work....

They must be given education and left to themselves. After that they will act as they think best. Even after marriage and entering the world, the girls educated as above will inspire their husbands with noble ideals and be the mothers of heroic sons. But there must be this rule that the guardians of the students in the women's Math must not even think of marrying them before they attain the age of fifteen.... These learned and accomplished girls will never be in want of bridegrooms. Society nowadays does not follow the texts recommending child-marriage nor will do so in future.[28]

Men ! Hands off

Educate your women first and leave them to themselves ; then they will tell you what reforms are necessary for them.[29]

Our right of interference is limited entirely to giving education. Women must be put in a position to solve their own problems in their own way. No one can or ought to do this for them. And our Indian women are as capable of doing it as any in the world.[30]

Liberty is the first condition of growth. It is wrong, a thousand times wrong, if any of you dares to say, 'I will work out the salvation of this woman or child.' I am asked again and again, what I think of the widow problem and

what I think of the woman question. Let me answer once for all—am I a widow that you ask me that nonsense ? Am I a woman that you ask me that question again and again ? Who are you to solve women's problems ? Are you the Lord God that you should rule over every widow and every woman ? Hands off ! They will solve their own problems.[31]

To the women of our country

To the women of this country I would say exactly what I say to the men. Believe in India and in our Indian faith. Be strong and hopeful and unashamed, and remember that with something to take, Hindus have immeasurably more to give than any other people in the world.[32]

Where is Gour-Ma ? We want a thousand such Mothers, with that noble stirring spirit.[33]

What was wanted was not a man, but a woman—a real lioness—to work for the Indians, women specially.[34]

We want both men and women. There is no distinction of sex in the soul.... We want thousands of men, and thousands of women, who will spread like wild fire from the Himalayas to Cape Comorin, from the North Pole to the South Pole—all over the world. It is no use indulging in child's play—neither is there time for it. Let those who have come for child's play be off now, while there is time, or they will surely come to grief. We want an organization. Off with laziness. Spread ! Spread ! Run like fire to all places.[35]

Who will give the world light ? Sacrifice in the past has been the Law, it will be, alas, for ages to come. The earth's bravest and best will have to sacrifice themselves for the good of many, for the welfare of all. Buddhas by the hundred are necessary with eternal love and pity.

Religions of the world have become lifeless mockeries. What the world wants is character. The world is in need of those whose life is one burning love, selfless. That love will make every word tell like thunderbolt.

...Bold words and bolder deeds are what we want. Awake, awake, great ones ! The world is burning with misery. Can you sleep ?[36]

With five hundred men, the conquest of India might take fifty years ; with as many women, not more than a few weeks.[37]

TRUE RELIGION

Definition of religion and its true form

Religion is the idea which is raising the brute unto man, and man unto God.[1]

There is one impulse in our minds which says, do. Behind it rises another voice which says, do not. There is one set of ideas in our mind which is always struggling to get outside through the channels of the senses, and behind that, although it may be thin and weak, there is an infinitely small voice which says, do not go outside. The two beautiful Sanskrit words for these phenomena are Pravritti and Nivritti, 'circling forward' and 'circling inward'.... Religion begins with this 'do not'. Spirituality begins with this 'do not'. When the 'do not' is not there, religion has not begun.[2]

Each soul is potentially divine. The goal is to manifest this Divinity within, by controlling nature, external and internal. Do this either by work, or worship, or psychic control, or philosophy—by one or more or all of these—and be free. This is the whole of religion. Doctrines, or dogmas, or rituals, or books, or temples, or forms, are but secondary details.[3]

Religion is the manifestation of the Divinity already in man.[4]

Religion is not in books, nor in theories, nor in dogmas, nor in talking, not even in reasoning. It is being and becoming. Ay, my friends, until each one of you has become a Rishi and come face to face with spiritual facts, religious life has not begun for you. Until the superconscious opens for you, religion is mere talk, it is nothing but preparation. You are talking second-hand, third-hand.[5]

Above all, there is another thing to remember, which I am sorry we forget from time to time, that religion, in India, means realization and nothing short of that.... 'Believe in the doctrine and you are safe', can never be taught to us, for we do not believe in that. You are what you make yourselves. You are, by the grace of God and your own exertions, what you are. Mere believing in certain theories and doctrine will not help you much. The mighty word that came out from the sky of spirituality in India was Anubhuti, realization, and ours are the only books which declare again and again : 'The Lord is to be *seen*.' Bold, brave words indeed, but true to their very core ; every sound, every vibration is true. Religion is to be realized, not only heard ; it is not in learning some doctrine like a parrot. Neither is it mere intellectual assent—that is nothing ; but it must come into us. Ay, and therefore the greatest proof that we have of the existence of a God is not because our reason says so, but because God has been seen by the ancients as well as by the moderns.[6]

Try to be pure and unselfish—that is the whole of religion.[7]

The secret of religion lies not in theories but in practice. To be good and to do good—that is the whole of religion.[8]

Unselfishness is God. One may live on a throne, in a golden palace, and be perfectly unselfish ; and then he is in God. Another may live in a hut and wear rags, and have nothing in the world ; yet, if he is selfish, he is intensely merged in the world.[9]

Selfishness is the chief sin, thinking of ourselves first. He who thinks, 'I will eat first, I will have more money than others, and I will possess everything', he who thinks, 'I will get to heaven before others, I will get Mukti before others' is the selfish man. The unselfish man says, 'I will be last, I do not care to go to heaven, I will even go to hell if by doing so I can help my brothers.' This unselfishness is the test of religion. He who has more of this unselfishness is more spiritual and nearer to Shiva.[10]

Virtue is that which tends to our improvement, and vice to our degeneration. Man is made up of three qualities—brutal, human, and godly. That which tends to increase the divinity in you is virtue, and that which tends to increase brutality in you is vice. You must kill the brutal nature and become human, that is, loving and charitable. You must transcend that too and become pure bliss, Sachchidananda, fire without burning, wonderfully loving, but without the weakness of human love, without the feeling of misery.[11]

If a religion cannot help man wherever he may be, wherever he stands, it is not of much use ; it will remain only a theory for the chosen few. Religion, to help mankind, must be ready and able to help him in whatever condition he is, in servitude or in freedom, in the depths of degradation or on the heights of purity ; everywhere, equally, it should be able to come to his aid.[12]

Anything that brings spiritual, mental, or physical weakness, touch it not with the toes of your feet. Religion is the manifestation of the natural strength that is in man. A spring of infinite power is coiled up and is inside this little body, and that spring is spreading itself. And as it goes on spreading, body after body is found insufficient ; it throws them off and takes higher bodies. This is the history of man, of religion, civilization, or progress.[13]

Ways to God

There are four general types of men—the rational, the emotional, the mystical, and the worker. For each of these we must provide suitable forms of worship. There comes the rational man, who says, 'I care not for this form of worship. Give me the philosophical, the rational—that I can appreciate.' So for the rational man is the rational philosophic worship. There comes the worker. He says, 'I care not for the worship of the philosopher. Give me work to do for my fellow men.' So for him is provided work as the path of worship. As for the mystical and the emotional, we have their respective modes of devotion.

All these men have, in religion, the elements of their faith.[14]

The ultimate goal of all mankind, the aim and end of all religions, is but one—re-union with God, or, what amounts to the same, with the divinity which is every man's true nature. But while the aim is one, the method of attaining may vary with the different temperaments of men.

Both the goal and the methods employed for reaching it are called Yoga, a word derived from the same Sanskrit root as the English 'Yoke', meaning 'to join', to join us to our reality, God. There are various such Yogas, or methods of union—but the chief ones are—Karma-Yoga, Bhakti-Yoga, Raja-Yoga, and Jnana-Yoga.

Every man must develop according to his own nature. As every science has its methods, so has every religion. The methods of attaining the end of religion are called Yoga by us, and the different forms of Yoga that we teach, are adapted to the different natures and temperaments of men. We classify them in the following way, under four heads :

1) Karma-Yoga—The manner in which a man realizes his own divinity through works and duty.
2) Bhakti-Yoga—The realization of the divinity through devotion to, and love of, a Personal God.
3) Raja-Yoga—The realization of the divinity through the control of mind.
4) Jnana-Yoga—The realization of a man's own divinity through knowledge.

These are all different roads leading to the same centre—God.[15]

Jnana, Bhakti, Yoga, and Karma—these are the four paths which lead to salvation. One must follow the path for which one is best suited ; but in this age special stress should be laid on Karma-Yoga.[16]

Jnana-Yoga—the path of knowledge

You must always remember that the one central ideal

of Vedanta is this oneness. There are no two in anything, no two lives, nor even two different kinds of life for the two worlds.... There is but one life, one world, one existence. Everything is that One, the difference is in degree and not in kind.... The amoeba and I are the same, the difference is only in degree ; and from the standpoint of the highest life, all these differences vanish.[17]

No perfection is going to be attained. You are already free and perfect. What are these ideas of religion and God and searching for the hereafter ? Why does man look for a God ? Why does man, in every nation, in every state of society, want a perfect ideal somewhere, either in man, in God, or elsewhere ? Because that idea is within you. It was your own heart beating and you did not know ; you were mistaking it for something external. It is the God within your own self that is propelling you to seek for Him, to realize Him. After long searches here and there, in temples and in churches, in earths and in heavens, at last you come back, completing the circle from where you started, to your own soul and find that He for whom you have been seeking all over the world, for whom you have been weeping and praying in churches and temples, on whom you were looking as the mystery of all mysteries shrouded in the clouds, is nearest of the near, is your own Self, the reality of your life, body, and soul. That is your own nature. Assert it, manifest it. Not to become pure, you are pure already. You are not to be perfect, you are that already. Nature is like that screen which is hiding the reality beyond. Every good thought that you think or act upon is simply tearing the veil, as it were ; and the purity, the Infinity, the God behind, manifests Itself more and more.[18]

The solution of the Vedanta is that we are not bound, we are free already. Not only so, but to say or to think that we are bound is dangerous—it is a mistake, it is self-hypnotism. As soon as you say, 'I am bound', 'I am weak', 'I am helpless', woe unto you ; you rivet one more chain upon yourself. Do not say it, do not think it.[19]

It is weakness, says the Vedanta, which is the cause of all misery in this world. Weakness is the one cause of suffering. We become miserable because we are weak. We lie, steal, kill, and commit other crimes, because we are weak. We suffer because we are weak. We die because we are weak. Where there is nothing to weaken us, there is no death nor sorrow. We are miserable through delusion. Give up the delusion, and the whole thing vanishes.[20]

My idea is to show that the highest ideal of morality and unselfishness goes hand in hand with the highest metaphysical conception, and that you need not lower your conception to get ethics and morality, but, on the other hand, to reach a real basis of morality and ethics you must have the highest philosophical and scientific conceptions. Human knowledge is not antagonistic to human well-being. On the contrary, it is knowledge alone that will save us in every department of life—in knowledge is worship. The more we know the better for us. The Vedantist says, the cause of all that is apparently evil is the limitation of the unlimited. The love which gets limited into little channels and seems to be evil eventually comes out at the other end and manifests itself as God. The Vedanta also says that the cause of all this apparent evil is in ourselves. Do not blame any supernatural being, neither be hopeless and despondent, nor think we are in a place from which we can never escape unless someone comes and lends us a helping hand. That cannot be, says the Vedanta.... But help does not come from without ; it comes from within ourselves. Cry to all the gods in the universe. I cried for years, and in the end I found that I was helped. But help came from within. And I had to undo what I had done by mistake. That is the only way. I had to cut the net which I had thrown round myself, and the power to do this is within. Of this I am certain that not one aspiration, well-guided or ill-guided in my life, has been in vain, but that I am the resultant of all my past, both good and evil. I have committed many mistakes in my life ; but mark you, I am sure of this that without every

one of those mistakes I should not be what I am today, and so am quite satisfied to have made them. I do not mean that you are to go home and wilfully commit mistakes ; do not misunderstand me in that way. But do not mope because of the mistakes you have committed, but know that in the end all will come out straight. It cannot be otherwise, because goodness is our nature, purity is our nature, and that nature can never be destroyed. Our essential nature always remains the same.[21]

Take the idea of sin. I was telling you just now the Vedantic idea of it, and the other idea is that man is a sinner. They are practically the same, only the one takes the positive and the other the negative side. One shows to man his strength and the other his weakness. There may be weakness, says the Vedanta, but never mind, we want to grow. Disease was found out as soon as man was born. Everyone knows his disease ; it requires no one to tell us what our diseases are. But thinking all the time that we are diseased will not cure us—medicine is necessary. We may forget anything outside, we may try to become hypocrites to the external world, but in our heart of hearts we all know our weaknesses. But, says the Vedanta, being reminded of weakness does not help much ; give strength, and strength does not come by thinking of weakness all the time. The remedy for weakness is not brooding over weakness, but thinking of strength. Teach men of the strength that is already within them. Instead of telling them they are sinners, the Vedanta takes the opposite position, and says, 'You are pure and perfect, and what you call sin does not belong to you.' Sins are very low degrees of Self-manifestation ; manifest your Self in a high degree. That is the one thing to remember ; all of us can do that. Never say, 'No', never say, 'I cannot', for you are infinite. Even time and space are as nothing compared with your nature. You can do anything and everything, you are almighty.[22]

Two forces have been working side by side in parallel

lines. The one says 'I', the other says 'not I'. Their manifestation is not only in man but in animals, not only in animals but in the smallest worms. The tigress that plunges her fangs into the warm blood of a human being would give up her own life to protect her young. The most depraved man who thinks nothing of taking the lives of his brother men will, perhaps, sacrifice himself without any hesitation to save his starving wife and children. Thus throughout creation these two forces are working side by side ; where you find the one, you find the other too. The one is selfishness, the other is unselfishness. The one is acquisition, the other is renunciation. The one takes, the other gives. From the lowest to the highest, the whole universe is the playground of these two forces. It does not require any demonstration ; it is obvious to all.

What right has any section of the community to base the whole work and evolution of the universe upon one of these two factors alone, upon competition and struggle ? What right has it to base the whole working of the universe upon passion and fight, upon competition and struggle ? That these exist we do not deny ; but what right has anyone to deny the working of the other force ? Can any man deny that love, this 'not I', this renunciation is the only positive power in the universe ? The other is only the misguided employment of the power of love ; the power of love brings competition, the real genesis of competition is in love. The real genesis of evil is in unselfishness. The creator of evil is good, and the end is also good. It is only misdirection of the power of good. A man who murders another is, perhaps, moved to do so by the love of his own child. His love has become limited to that one little baby, to the exclusion of the millions of other human beings in the universe. Yet, limited or unlimited, it is the same love.

Thus the motive power of the whole universe, in whatever way it manifests itself, is that one wonderful thing, unselfishness, renunciation, love, the real, the only living force in existence. Therefore the Vedantist insists upon that oneness.[3]

Advaita and Advaita alone explains morality. Every religion preaches that the essence of all morality is to do good to others. And why ? Be unselfish. And why should I ? Some God has said it ? He is not for me. Some texts have declared it ? Let them ; that is nothing to me ; let them all tell it. And if they do, what is it to me ? Each one for himself, and somebody take the hindermost—that is all the morality in the world, at least with many. What is the reason that I should be moral ? You cannot explain it except when you come to know the truth as given in the Gita : 'He who sees everyone in himself, and himself in everyone, thus seeing the same God living in all, he, the sage, no more kills the Self by the self.' Know through Advaita that whomsoever you hurt, you hurt yourself ; they are all you. Whether you know it or not, through all hands you work, through all feet you move, you are the king enjoying in the palace, you are the beggar leading that miserable existence in the street ; you are in the ignorant as well as in the learned, you are in the man who is weak, and you are in the strong ; know this and be sympathetic. And that is why we must not hurt others. That is why I do not even care whether I have to starve, because there will be millions of mouths eating at the same time, and they are all mine. Therefore I should not care what becomes of me and mine, for the whole universe is mine, I am enjoying all the bliss at the same time ; and who can kill me or the universe ? Herein is morality. Here, in Advaita alone, is morality explained. The others teach it, but cannot give you its reason.[24]

We, as personalized, differentiated beings, forget our reality, and the teaching of monism is not that we shall give up these differentiations, but we must learn to understand what they are. We are in reality that Infinite Being, and our personalities represent so many channels through which this Infinite Reality is manifesting Itself ; and the whole mass of changes which we call evolution is brought about by the soul trying to manifest more and more of its infinite energy. We cannot stop anywhere on

this side of the Infinite ; our power, and blessedness, and wisdom, cannot but grow into the Infinite. Infinite power and existence and blessedness are ours, and we have not to acquire them ; they are our own, and we have only to manifest them.

This is the central idea of monism.[25]

Life is full of ills, the world is full of evils ; that is a fact no one who is old enough to know the world can deny.

But what is the remedy proposed by all the religions ? That this world is nothing. Beyond this world is something which is very real. Here comes the difficulty. The remedy seems to destroy everything.... Is there no way out then ? The Vedanta says that what all the religions advance is perfectly true, but it should be properly understood....

The Vedanta does not in reality denounce the world. The ideal of renunciation nowhere attains such a height as in the teachings of the Vedanta. But, at the same time, dry suicidal advice is not intended ; it really means deification of the world—giving up the world as we think of it, as we know it, as it appears to us—and to know what it really is. Deify it ; it is God alone. We read at the commencement of one of the oldest of the Upanishads, 'Whatever exists in this universe is to be covered with the Lord.' We have to cover everything with the Lord Himself, not by a false sort of optimism, not by blinding our eyes to the evil, but by really seeing God in everything. Thus we have to give up the world, and when the world is given up, what remains ? God. What is meant ? You can have your wife ; it does not mean that you are to abandon her, but that you are to see God in the wife. Give up your children ; what does that mean ? To turn them out of doors, as some human brutes do in every country ? Certainly not. That is diabolism ; it is not religion. But see God in your children. So, in everything. In life and in death, in happiness and in misery, the Lord is equally present. The whole world is full of the Lord. Open your eyes and see Him.... Open your eyes and see that as such it never existed ; it was a

dream, Maya. What existed was the Lord Himself. It is He who is in the child, in the wife, and in the husband : it is He who is in the good and in the bad ; He is in the sin and in the sinner ; He is in life and in death.[26]

Raja-Yoga—the path of psychic control

The aim is to get rid of nature's control over us. That is the goal of all religions.... The Yogi tries to reach this goal through psychic control. Until we can free ourselves from nature, we are slaves ; as she dictates so we must go. The Yogi claims that he who controls mind controls matter also. The internal nature is much higher than the external and much more difficult to grapple with, much more difficult to control. Therefore he who has conquered the internal nature controls the whole universe ; it becomes his servant. Raja-Yoga propounds the methods of gaining this control.[27]

The science of Raja-Yoga, in the first place, proposes to give us such a means of observing the internal states. The instrument is the mind itself.... The object is internal, the mind itself is the object, and it is necessary to study the mind itself—mind studying mind. We know that there is the power of the mind called reflection.... You work and think at the same time, while a portion of your mind stands by and sees what you are thinking. The powers of the mind should be concentrated and turned back upon itself, and as the darkest places reveal their secrets before the penetrating rays of the sun, so will this concentrated mind penetrate its own innermost secrets.... This is what Raja-Yoga proposes to teach. The goal of all its teaching is how to concentrate the mind, then, how to discover the innermost recesses of our own minds, then, how to generalise their contents and form our own conclusions from them.[28]

A man feels that if he is unchaste, spirituality goes away, he loses mental vigour and moral stamina. That is why in all the religious orders in the world which have produced spiritual giants you will always find absolute

chastity insisted upon. That is why the monks came into existence, giving up marriage. There must be perfect chastity in thought, word, and deed ; without it the practice of Raja-Yoga is dangerous, and may lead to insanity. If people practise Raja-Yoga and at the same time lead an impure life, how can they expect to become Yogis ?[29]

★★★★★

Bhakti-Yoga—the path of devotion

Bhakti is everywhere, whether directed to God or to noble persons. Upasana in the form of Bhakti is everywhere supreme, and Bhakti is more easily attained than Jnana. The latter requires favourable circumstances and strenuous practice. Yoga cannot be properly practised unless a man is physically very healthy and free from all worldly attachments. But Bhakti can be more easily practised by persons in every condition of life.

It is not Bhakti if we worship God with the desire for a son ; it is not Bhakti if we worship with the desire to be rich ; it is not Bhakti even if we have a desire for heaven ; it is not Bhakti if a man worships with the desire of being saved from the tortures of hell. Bhakti is not the outcome of fear or greediness. He is the true Bhagavata who says, 'O God, I do not want a beautiful wife, I do not want knowledge or salvation. Let me be born and die hundreds of times. What I want is that I should be ever engaged in Thy service.'[30]

The Bhakti of India is not like the Western Bhakti. The central idea of ours is that there is no thought of fear. It is always, love God.... Bhakti is spoken of in the oldest of the Upanishads, which is much older than the Christian Bible. The germs of Bhakti are even in the Samhita (the Vedic hymns). The word Bhakti is not a Western word. It was suggested by the word Shraddha.[31]

The lowest form in which this love is apprehended is what they call the peaceful—the Shanta. When a man worships God without the fire of love in him, without its madness in his brain, when his love is just the calm

commonplace love, a little higher than mere forms and ceremonies and symbols, but not at all characterised by the madness of intensely active love, it is said to be Shanta. We see some people in the world who like to move on slowly, and others who come and go like the whirlwind. The Shanta-Bhakta is calm, peaceful, gentle.

The next higher type is that of Dasya, i.e. servantship ; it comes when a man thinks he is the servant of the Lord. The attachment of the faithful servant unto the master is his ideal.

The next type of love is Sakhya, friendship—'Thou art our beloved friend.' Just as a man opens his heart to his friend and knows that the friend will never chide him or his faults but will always try to help him, just as there is the idea of equality between him and his friend, so equal love flows in and out between the worshipper and his friendly God. Thus God becomes our friend, the friend who is near, the friend to whom we may freely tell all the tales of our lives....

The next is what is known as Vatsalya, loving God not as our Father but as our Child. This may look peculiar, but it is a discipline to enable us to detach all ideas of power from the concept of God. The idea of power brings with it awe. There should be no awe in love.... To conceive God as mighty, majestic, and glorious, as the Lord of the universe, or as the God of gods, the lover says he does not care. It is to avoid this association with God of the fear-creating sense of power that he worships God as his own child. The mother and the father are not moved by awe in relation to the child ; they cannot have any reverence for the child. They cannot think of asking any favour from the child. The child's position is always that of the receiver, and out of love for the child the parents will give up their bodies a hundred times over. A thousand lives they will sacrifice for that one child of theirs, and, therefore, God is loved as a child....

There is one more human representation of the divine ideal of love. It is known as Madhura, sweet, and is the

highest of all such representations. It is indeed based on the highest manifestation of love in this world, and this love is also the strongest known to man. What love shakes the whole nature of man, what love runs through every atom of his being—makes him mad, makes him forget his own nature, transforms him, makes him either a God or a demon—as the love between man and woman? In this sweet representation of divine love God is our husband. We are all women; there are no men in this world; there is but One man, and that is He, our Beloved. All that love which man gives to woman, or woman to man, has here to be given up to the Lord....

Ay, the true spiritual lover does not rest even there; even the love of husband and wife is not mad enough for him. The Bhaktas take up also the idea of illegitimate love, because it is so strong; the impropriety of it is not at all the thing they have in view. The nature of this love is such that the more obstructions there are for its free play, the more passionate it becomes. The love between husband and wife is smooth, there are no obstructions there. So the Bhaktas take up the idea of a girl who is in love with her own beloved, and her mother or father or husband objects to such love; and the more anybody obstructs the course of her love, so much the more is her love tending to grow in strength. Human language cannot describe how Krishna in the groves of Vrinda was madly loved, how at the sound of his voice the ever-blessed Gopis rushed out to meet him, forgetting everything, forgetting this world and its ties, its duties, its joys, and its sorrows. Man, O man, you speak of divine love and at the same time are able to attend to all the vanities of this world—are you sincere? 'Where Rama is, there is no room for any desire—where desire is, there is no room for Rama; these never coexist—like light and darkness they are never together.'[32]

That love which a man has for his beloved can illustrate the love we ought to have for God. Krishna is the God and Radha loves Him.... But how many

understand this ? How can people who are vicious to their very core and have no idea of what morality is understand all this ? When people drive all sorts of worldly thoughts from their minds and live in a clear moral and spiritual atmosphere, it is then that they understand the abstrusest of thoughts even if they be uneducated. But how few are there of that nature![33]

There is Bhakti within you, only a veil of lust-and-wealth covers it, and as soon as that is removed Bhakti will manifest by itself.[34]

Love is great and noble, but it may die away in meaningless sentimentalism.[35]

The one great advantage of Bhakti is that it is the easiest and the most natural way to reach the great divine end in view ; its great disadvantage is that in its lower forms it oftentimes degenerates into hideous fanaticism.[36]

Shri Chaitanya was a man of tremendous renunciation and had nothing to do with woman and carnal appetites. But, in later times, his disciples admitted women into their order, mixed indiscriminately with them in his name, and made an awful mess of the whole thing. And the ideal of love which the Lord exemplified in his life was perfectly selfless and bereft of any vestige of lust ; that sexless love can never be the property of the masses. But the subsequent Vaishnava Gurus, instead of laying particular stress first on the aspect of renunciation in the Master's life, bestowed all their zeal on preaching and infusing his ideal of love among the masses, and the consequence was that the common people could not grasp and assimilate that high ideal of divine love, and naturally made of it the worst form of love between man and woman....

There can be no love so long as there is lust—even a speck of it, as it were, in the heart. None but men of great renunciation, none but mighty giants among men, have a right to that Love Divine. If that highest ideal of love is held out to the masses, it will indirectly tend to stimulate its worldly prototype which dominates the heart of man—for, meditating on love to God by thinking of oneself as

His wife or beloved, one would very likely be thinking most of the time of one's own wife—the result is too obvious to point out....

Are there no other relationships by which to worship God, except this Madhura idea of love? Why not follow the four other paths, and take the name of the Lord with all your heart? Let the heart be opened first, and all else will follow of itself. But know this for certain, that Prema cannot come while there is lust. Why not try first to get rid of carnal desires?...

But don't think that Kirtana means dancing only. It means singing the glories of God, in whatever way that suits you. That vehement stirring up of feeling and that dancing of the Vaishnavas are good and very catching no doubt; but there is also a danger in practising them, from which you must save yourself. The danger lies here—in the reaction. On the one hand, the feelings are at once roused to the highest pitch, tears flow from the eyes, the head reels as it were under intoxication—on the other hand, as soon as the Sankirtan stops, that mass of feeling sinks down as precipitately as it rose. The higher the wave rises on the ocean, the lower it falls, with equal force. It is very difficult at that stage to contain oneself against the shock of reaction; unless one has proper discrimination, one is likely to succumb to the lower propensities of lust etc....

Worship God with Bhakti tempered with Jnana. Keep the spirit of discrimination along with Bhakti. Besides this, gather from Shri Chaitanya, his heart, his loving kindness to all beings, his burning passion for God, and make his renunciation the ideal of your life.[37]

★★★★★

Karma-Yoga—the path of action

The only true duty is to be unattached and to work as free beings, to give up all work unto God. All our duties are His.[38]

Any work, any action, any thought that produces an effect is called a Karma.[39]

To work properly, therefore, you have first to give up the idea of attachment. Secondly, do not mix in the fray, hold yourself as a witness and go on working. My master used to say, 'Look upon your children as a nurse does. The nurse will take your baby and fondle it and play with it and behave towards it as gently as if it were her own child ; but as soon as you give her notice to quit, she is ready to start off bag and baggage from the house. Everything in the shape of attachment is forgotten.... Even so are you to be with all that you consider your own. You are the nurse, and if you believe in God, believe that all these things which you consider yours are really His.[40]

Let us do good because it is good to do good ; he who does good work even in order to get to heaven binds himself down, says the Karma-Yogi. Any work that is done with any the least selfish motive, instead of making us free, forges one more chain for our feet.

So the only way is to give up all the fruits of work, to be unattached to them.... Every good work we do without any ulterior motive, instead of forging a new chain, will break one of the links in the existing chains. Every good thought that we send to the world without thinking of any return, will be stored up there and break one link in the chain, and make us purer and purer, until we become the purest of mortals.[41]

Only that kind of work which develops our spirituality is work. Whatever fosters materiality is no-work.[42]

In this human life, one cannot help doing some kind of work always. When man has perforce to do some work, Karma-Yoga enjoins on him to do it in such a way as will bring freedom through the realization of the Atman.[43]

To attain liberation through work, join yourself to work but without desire, looking for no result. Such work leads to knowledge, which in turn brings emancipation. To give up work before you *know*, leads to misery. Work done for the Self gives no bondage. Neither desire pleasure nor fear pain from work.... Do all as a sacrifice or

offering to the Lord. Be in the world, but not of it, like the lotus leaf whose roots are in the mud but which remains always pure. Let your love go to all, whatever they do to you.[44]

If you have no eye to the fruits of work, and if you have a passionate longing to go beyond all selfish desires, then these good works will help to break your bonds, I tell you. How thoughtless of you to say that such work will lead to bondage ! Such disinterested work is the only means of rooting out the bondage due to selfish work. 'नान्यः पन्था विद्यतेऽयनाय—There is no other way out'.[45]

Shri Krishna ought to be painted as He really was, the Gita personified ; and the central idea of the Gita should radiate from His whole form....

Intense action in the whole body, and withal a face expressing the profound calmness and serenity of the blue sky ! This is the central idea of the Gita—to be calm and steadfast in all circumstances, with one's body, mind, and soul centred at His Hallowed Feet.

कर्मण्यकर्म यः पश्येदकर्मणि च कर्म यः ।
स बुद्धिमान्मनुष्येषु स युक्तः कृत्स्नकर्मकृत् ॥

(Gita, IV.18)

He who even while doing action can keep his mind calm, and in whom, even when not doing any outward action, flows the current of activity in the form of the contemplation of Brahman, is the intelligent one among men, he indeed is the Yogi, he indeed is the perfect worker....

This idea must be preached to everyone—work, work, endless work—without looking at results, and always keeping the whole mind and soul steadfast at the Lotus Feet of the Lord !...

The Tantrika form of worship is a very slippery ground.... this province has had enough of the Tantra. Now it must go beyond. The Vedas should be studied. A harmony of the four kinds of Yogas must be practised and absolute chastity must be preserved.

Discrimination between the real and the unreal, dispassion and devotion, work and practices in concentration, and along with these there must be a reverential attitude towards women.

...They are the representations of the Divine Mother.... real well-being of India will commence from the day that the worship of the Divine Mother will truly begin, and every man will sacrifice himself at the altar of the Mother.[46]

Harmony of religions

The greatest misfortune to befall the world would be if all mankind were to recognize and accept but one religion, one universal form of worship, one standard of morality. This would be the death-blow to all religious and spiritual progress. Instead of trying to hasten this disastrous event by inducing persons, through good or evil methods, to conform to our own highest ideal of truth, we ought rather to endeavour to remove all obstacles which prevent men from developing in accordance with their own highest ideals, and thus make their attempt vain to establish one universal religion.[47]

We believe not only in universal toleration, but we accept all religions as true. I am proud to belong to a nation which has sheltered the persecuted and the refugees of all religions and all nations of the earth.[48]

We must not only tolerate others, but positively embrace them, and that truth is the basis of all religions.[49]

Condemn none ; if you can stretch out a helping hand, do so. If you cannot, fold your hands, bless your brothers, and let them go their own way. Dragging down and condemning is not the way to work. Never is work accomplished in that way. We spend our energies in condemning others. Criticism and condemnation is a vain way of spending our energies, for in the long run we come to learn that all are seeing the same thing, are more or less approaching the same ideal, and that most of our differences are merely differences of expression.[50]

Indeed, the varieties of religious belief are an advantage, since all faiths are good, so far as they encourage man to lead a religious life. The more sects there are, the more opportunities there are for making successful appeals to the divine instinct in all men.[51]

My Master taught that religion is one ; all prophets teach the same ; but they can only present the principle in a form ; so they take it out of the old form and put it before us in a new one.[52]

In all religions the superconscious state is identical. Hindus, Christians, Mohammedans, Buddhists, and even those of no creed, all have the very same experience when they transcend the body.[53]

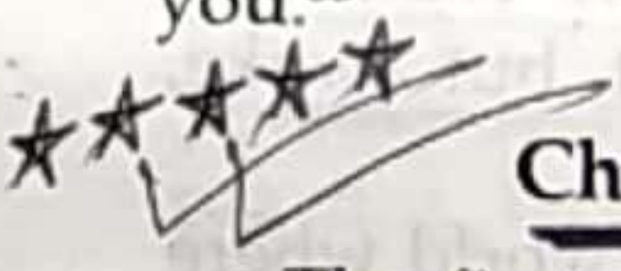
The Christian is not to become a Hindu or a Buddhist, nor a Hindu or a Buddhist to become a Christian. But each must assimilate the spirit of the others and yet preserve his individuality and grow according to his own law of growth.

...Holiness, purity and charity are not the exclusive possessions of any church in the world, and that every system has produced men and women of the most exalted character. In the face of this evidence, if anybody dreams of the exclusive survival of his own religion and the destruction of the others, I pity him from the bottom of my heart, and point out to him that upon the banner of every religion will soon be written, in spite of resistance : 'Help and not Fight', 'Assimilation and not Destruction', 'Harmony and Peace and not Dissension.'[54]

If there is ever to be a universal religion, it must be one which will have no location in place or time ; which will be infinite like the God it will preach, and whose sun will shine upon the followers of Krishna and of Christ, on saints and sinners alike ; which will not be Brahminic or Buddhistic, Christian or Mohammedan, but the sum total of all these, and still have infinite space for development ; which in its catholicity will embrace in its infinite arms, and find a place for, every human being, from the lowest grovelling savage not far removed from the brute, to the

highest man towering by the virtues of his head and heart almost above humanity, making society stand in awe of him and doubt his human nature. It will be a religion which will have no place for persecution or intolerance in its polity, which will recognize divinity in every man and woman, and whose whole scope, whose whole force, will be centred in aiding humanity to realize its own true, divine nature.

Offer such a religion, and all the nations will follow you.[55]



Characteristics of a spiritual man

The first sign that you are becoming religious is that you are becoming cheerful. When a man is gloomy, that may be dyspepsia, but it is not religion.... Misery is caused by sin, and by no other cause.... If you have a clouded face, do not go out that day, shut yourself up in your room. What right have you to carry this disease out into the world ?[56]

The real spiritual man is broad everywhere. His love forces him to be so. Those to whom religion is a trade are forced to become narrow and mischievous by their introduction into religion of the competitive, fighting, and selfish methods of the world.[57]

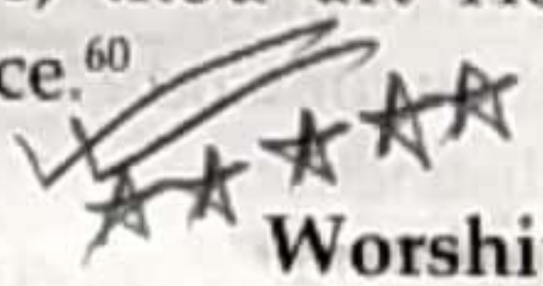
Why do we see wickedness ? ...We see the world as we are. Suppose there is a baby in a room with a bag of gold on the table and a thief comes and steals the gold. Would the baby know it was stolen ? That which we have inside, we see outside. The baby has no thief inside and sees no thief outside. So with all knowledge. Do not talk of the wickedness of the world and all its sins. Weep that you are bound to see wickedness yet. Weep that you are bound to see sin everywhere, and if you want to help the world, do not condemn it. Do not weaken it more. For what is sin and what is misery, and what are all these, but the results of weakness ? The world is made weaker and weaker every day by such teachings. Men are taught from

childhood that they are weak and sinners. Teach them that they are all glorious children of immortality, even those who are the weakest in manifestation. Let positive, strong, helpful thoughts enter into their brains from very childhood. Lay yourselves open to these thoughts, and not to weakening and paralysing ones. Say to your own minds, 'I am He, I am He.' Let it ring day and night in your minds like a song, and at the point of death declare, 'I am He.' That is the Truth ; the infinite strength of the world is yours.... Let us be brave. Know the Truth and practise the Truth. The goal may be distant, but awake, arise, and stop not till the goal is reached.[58]

Do you not know from the history of the world where the power of the prophets lay ? Where was it ? In the intellect ? Did any of them write a fine book on philosophy, on the most intricate ratiocinations of logic ? Not one of them. They only spoke a few words. Feel like Christ and you will be a Christ ; feel like Buddha and you will be a Buddha. It is feeling that is the life, the strength, the vitality, without which no amount of intellectual activity can reach God.[59]

There are two sorts of courage. One is the courage of facing the cannon. And the other is the courage of spiritual conviction. An emperor who invaded India was told by his teacher to go and see some of the sages there. After a long search for one, he found a very old man sitting on a block of stone. The emperor talked with him a little and became very much impressed by his wisdom. He asked the sage to go to his country with him. 'No', said the sage, 'I am quite satisfied with my forest here.' Said the Emperor, 'I will give you money, position, wealth. I am the Emperor of the world.' 'No', replied the man, 'I don't care for those things.' The Emperor replied, 'If you do not go, I will kill you.' The man smiled serenely and said, 'That is the most foolish thing you ever said, Emperor. You cannot kill me. Me the sun cannot dry, fire cannot burn, sword cannot kill, for I am the birthless, the deathless, the ever-living omnipotent, omnipresent spirit.'

This is spiritual boldness, while the other is the courage of a lion or a tiger. In the Mutiny of 1857 there was a Swami, a very great soul, whom a Mohammedan mutineer stabbed severely. The Hindu mutineers caught and brought the man to the Swami, offering to kill him. But the Swami looked up calmly and said, 'My brother, thou art He, thou art He!' and expired. This is another instance.[60]



Worship of the living God

The secret of religion lies not in theories but in practice. To be good and to do good—that is the whole of religion. 'Not he that crieth "Lord", "Lord", but he that doeth the will of the Father.'[61]

Be moral. Be brave. Be a heart-whole man. Strictly moral, brave unto desperation. Don't bother your head with religious theories. Cowards only sin, brave men never, no, not even in mind.[62]

If you are really pure, how do you see the impure? For what is within, is without. We cannot see impurity without having it inside ourselves. This is one of the practical sides of Vedanta, and I hope that we shall all try to carry it into our lives.[63]

Doing good to others is virtue (Dharma); injuring others is sin. Strength and manliness are virtue; weakness and cowardice are sin. Independence is virtue; dependence is sin. Loving others is virtue; hating others is sin. Faith in God and in one's own Self is virtue; doubt is sin. Knowledge of oneness is virtue; seeing diversity is sin.[64]

The watchword of all well-being, of all moral good is not 'I' but 'thou'. Who cares whether there is a heaven or a hell, who cares if there is an unchangeable or not? Here is the world, and it is full of misery. Go out into it as Buddha did, and struggle to lessen it or die in the attempt. Forget yourselves; this is the first lesson to be learnt, whether you are a theist or an atheist, whether you are an agnostic or a Vedantist, a

Christian or a Mohammedan. The one lesson obvious to all is the destruction of the little self and the building up of the Real Self.[65]

After so much austerity, I have understood this as the real truth—God is present in every Jiva ; there is no other God besides that. 'Who serves Jiva, serves God indeed.'[66]

> These are His manifold forms before thee,
> Rejecting them, where seekest thou for God ?
> Who loves all beings, without distinction,
> He indeed is worshipping best his God.[67]

You have read—मातृदेवो भव पितृदेवो भव—'Look upon your mother as God, look upon your father as God',—but I say दरिद्रदेवो भव, मूर्खदेवो भव—the poor, the illiterate, the ignorant, the afflicted—let these be your God. Know that service to these alone is the highest religion.[68]

We want to worship a living God. I have seen nothing but God all my life, nor have you. To see this chair you first see God, and then the chair in and through Him. He is everywhere saying, 'I am'. The moment you feel 'I am', you are conscious of Existence. Where shall we go to find God if we cannot see Him in our own hearts and in every living being ?[69]

If in this hell of a world one can bring a little joy and peace even for a day into the heart of a single person, that much alone is true ; this I have learnt after suffering all my life ; all else is mere moonshine.[70]

If you want any good to come, just throw your ceremonials overboard and worship the Living God, the Man-God—every being that wears a human form—God in His universal as well as individual aspect. The universal aspect of God means this world, and worshipping it means serving it—this indeed is work, not indulging in ceremonials.... Millions of rupees have been spent only that the temple-doors at Varanasi or Vrindaban may play at opening and shutting all day long ! Now the Lord is having His toilet, now He is taking His meals, now He is busy on something else we know not what.... And all this,

while the Living God is dying for want of food, for want of education ! The banias of Bombay are erecting hospitals for bugs—while they would do nothing for men—even if they die ! You have not the brain to understand this simple thing—that it is a plague with our country, and lunatic asylums are rife all over.[71]

Look upon every man, woman, and every one as God. You cannot help anyone, you can only serve : serve the children of the Lord, serve the Lord Himself, if you have the privilege. If the Lord grants that you can help any one of His children, blessed you are ; do not think too much of yourselves. Blessed you are that that privilege was given to you when others had it not. Do it only as a worship. I should see God in the poor, and it is for my salvation that I go and worship them. The poor and the miserable are for our salvation, so that we may serve the Lord, coming in the shape of the diseased, coming in the shape of the lunatic, the leper, and the sinner ![72]

The first of all worship is the worship of the Virat—of those all around us. Worship It. Worship is the exact equivalent of the Sanskrit word, and no other English word will do. These are all our gods—men and animals ; and the first gods we have to worship are our countrymen. These we have to worship, instead of being jealous of each other and fighting each other.[73]

This is the gist of all worship—to be pure and to do good to others. He who sees Shiva in the poor, in the weak, and in the diseased, really worships Shiva ; and if he sees Shiva only in the image, his worship is but preliminary. He who has served and helped one poor man seeing Shiva in him, without thinking of his caste, or creed, or race, or anything, with him Shiva is more pleased than with the man who sees Him only in temples.

A rich man had a garden and two gardeners. One of these gardeners was very lazy and did not work ; but when the owner came to the garden, the lazy man would get up and fold his arms and say, 'How beautiful is the face of my master', and dance before him. The other

gardener would not talk much, but would work hard, and produce all sorts of fruits and vegetables which he would carry on his head to his master who lived a long way off. Of these two gardeners, which would be the more beloved of his master ? Shiva is that master, and this world is His garden, and there are two sorts of gardeners here ; the one who is lazy, hypocritical, and does nothing, only talking about Shiva's beautiful eyes and nose and other features ; and the other, who is taking care of Shiva's children, all those that are poor and weak, all animals, and all His creation. Which of these would be the more beloved of Shiva ? Certainly he that serves His children. He who wants to serve the father must serve the children first. He who wants to serve Shiva must serve His children—must serve all creatures in this world first. It is said in the Shastra that those who serve the servants of God are His greatest servants. So you will bear this in mind. Let me tell you again that you must be pure and help anyone who comes to you, as much as lies in your power. And this is good Karma. By the power of this, the heart becomes pure (Chitta-shuddhi), and then Shiva who is residing in every one will become manifest.... And if a man is selfish, even though he has visited all the temples, seen all the places of pilgrimage, and painted himself like a leopard, he is still further off from Shiva.[74]

You are the highest temple of God ; I would rather worship you than any temple, image, or Bible. Why are some people so contradictory in their thought ?... They say they are hard-headed practical men. Very good. But what is more practical than worshipping here, worshipping you ? I see you, feel you, and I know you are God.... The only God to worship is the human soul in the human body. Of course all animals are temples too, but man is the highest, the Taj Mahal of temples. If I cannot worship in that, no other temple will be of any advantage. The moment I have realized God sitting in the temple of every human body, the moment I stand in reverence before every human being and see God in him—that moment I

am free from bondage, everything that binds vanishes, and I am free.[75]

The next question is to know what comes after realization.... Yet religious realization does all the good to the world. People are afraid that when they attain to it, when they realize that there is but one, the fountains of love will be dried up, that everything in life will go away, and that all they love will vanish for them, as it were, in this life and in the life to come. People never stop to think that those who bestowed the least thought on their own individualities have been the greatest workers in the world. Then alone a man loves when he finds that the object of his love is not any low, little, mortal thing. Then alone a man loves when he finds that the object of his love is not a clod of earth, but it is the veritable God Himself. The wife will love the husband the more when she thinks that the husband is God Himself. The husband will love the wife the more when he knows that the wife is God Himself. That mother will love the children more who thinks that the children are God Himself. That man will love his greatest enemy who knows that that very enemy is God Himself. That man will love a holy man who knows that the holy man is God Himself, and that very man will also love the unholiest of men because he knows the background of that unholiest of men is even He, the Lord. Such a man becomes a world-mover for whom his little self is dead and God stands in its place. The whole universe will become transfigured to him. That which is painful and miserable will all vanish ; struggles will all depart and go. Instead of being a prison-house, where we every day struggle and fight and compete for a morsel of bread, this universe will then be to us a playground. Beautiful will be this universe then ! Such a man alone has the right to stand up and say, 'How beautiful is this world !' He alone has the right to say that it is all good. This will be the great good to the world resulting from such realization, that instead of this world going on with all its friction and clashing, if all mankind today realize

only a bit of that great truth, the aspect of the whole world will be changed, and, in place of fighting and quarrelling, these would be a reign of peace. This indecent and brutal hurry which forces us to go ahead of everyone else will then vanish from the world. With it will vanish all struggle, with it will vanish all hate, with it will vanish all jealousy, and all evil will vanish away for ever. Gods will live then upon this earth. This very earth will then become heaven, and what evil can there be when gods are playing with gods, when gods are working with gods, and gods are loving gods? That is the great utility of divine realization. Everything that you see in society will be changed and transfigured then. No more will you think of man as evil; and that is the first great gain. No more will you stand up and sneeringly cast a glance at a poor man or woman who has made a mistake.... No more will you think of jealousy and punishments. They will all vanish; and love, the great ideal of love, will be so powerful that no whip and cord will be necessary to guide mankind aright.

If one millionth part of the men and women who live in this world simply sit down and for a few minutes say, 'You are all God, O ye men and O ye animals and living beings, you are all the manifestations of the one living Deity!' the whole world will be changed in half an hour. Instead of throwing tremendous bomb-shells of hatred into every corner, instead of projecting currents of jealousy and of evil thought, in every country people will think that it is all He. He is all that you see and feel. How can you see evil until there is evil in you? How can you see the thief, unless he is there, sitting in the heart of your heart? How can you see the murderer until you are yourself the murderer? Be good, and evil will vanish for you. The whole universe will thus be changed. This is the greatest gain to society. This is the great gain to the human organism.[76]

Bring all light into the world. Light, bring light! Let light come unto everyone; the task will not be finished till

everyone has reached the Lord. Bring light to the poor; and bring more light to the rich, for they require it more than the poor. Bring light to the ignorant, and more light to the educated, for the vanities of the education of our time are tremendous! Thus bring light to all and leave the rest unto the Lord, for in the words of the same Lord, 'To work you have the right and not to the fruits thereof.' 'Let not your work produce results for *you*, and at the same time may you never be without work.'[77]

FAITH IN ONE'S SELF

Faith, faith, faith in ourselves, faith, faith in God—this is the secret of greatness. If you have faith in all the three hundred and thirty millions of your mythological gods, and in all the gods which foreigners have now and again introduced into your midst, and still have no faith in yourselves, there is no salvation for you.[1]

The history of the world is the history of a few men who had faith in themselves. That faith calls out the divinity within. You can do anything. You fail only when you do not strive sufficiently to manifest infinite power. As soon as a man or a nation loses faith, death comes.[2]

He is an atheist who does not believe in himself. The old religions said that he was an atheist who did not believe in God. The new religion says that he is the atheist who does not believe in himself.[3]

Never think there is anything impossible for the soul. It is the greatest heresy to think so. If there is sin, this is the only sin—to say that you are weak, or others are weak.[4]

Whatever you think, that you will be. If you think yourselves weak, weak you will be; if you think yourselves strong, strong you will be.[5]

Never mind the struggles, the mistakes. I never heard a cow tell a lie, but it is only a cow—never a man. So never mind these failures, these little backslidings; hold the ideal a thousand times, and if you fail a thousand times, make the attempt once more.[6]

The remedy for weakness is not brooding over weakness, but thinking of strength.[7]

Be strong, my young friends; that is my advice to you. You will be nearer to Heaven through football than

through the study of the Gita. These are bold words ; but I have to say them, for I love you. I know where the shoe pinches. I have gained a little experience. You will understand the Gita better with your biceps, your muscles, a little stronger.[8]

This is the great fact : strength is life, weakness is death. Strength is felicity, life eternal, immortal ; weakness is constant strain and misery : weakness is death.[9]

To succeed, you must have tremendous perseverance, tremendous will. 'I will drink the ocean', says the persevering soul, 'at my will mountains will crumble up.' Have that sort of energy, that sort of will, work hard, and you will reach the goal.[10]

Be not in despair ; the way is very difficult, like walking on the edge of a razor ; yet despair not, arise, awake, and find the ideal, the goal.[11]

Let people say whatever they like, stick to your own convictions, and rest assured, the world will be at your feet. They say, 'Have faith in this fellow or that fellow', but I say, 'Have faith in yourself first', that's the way. Have faith in yourself—all power is in you—be conscious and bring it out.[12]

Be of good cheer and believe that we are selected by the Lord to do great things, and we will do them.[13]

What we should have is what we have not, perhaps what our forefathers even had not—that which the Yavanas had ; that, impelled by the life-vibration of which, is issuing forth in rapid succession from the great dynamo of Europe, the electric flow of that tremendous power vivifying the whole world. We want that. We want that energy, that love of independence, that spirit of self-reliance, that immovable fortitude, that dexterity in action, that bond of unity of purpose, that thirst for improvement. Checking a little the constant looking back to the past, we want that expansive vision infinitely projected forward ; and we want—that intense spirit of activity (Rajas) which will flow through our every vein, from head to foot.[14]

Be moral. Be brave. Be a heart-whole man. Strictly moral, brave unto desperation. Don't bother your head

with religious theories. Cowards only sin, brave men never, no, not even in mind.[15]

Go and preach to all, 'Arise, awake, sleep no more; within each of you there is the power to remove all wants and all miseries. Believe this, and that power will be manifested.'[16]

Proclaim the glory of the Atman with the roar of a lion, and impart fearlessness unto all beings by saying, 'Arise, awake, and stop not till the goal is reached.'[17]

Say, 'This misery that I am suffering is of my own doing, and that very thing proves that it will have to be undone by me alone.' That which I created, I can demolish.... Therefore, stand up, be bold, be strong. Take the whole responsibility on your own shoulders, and know that you are the creator of your own destiny. All the strength and succour you want is within yourselves.[18]

The ideal of faith in ourselves is of the greatest help to us. If faith in ourselves had been more extensively taught and practised, I am sure a very large portion of the evils and miseries that we have would have vanished. Throughout the history of mankind, if any motive power has been more potent than another in the lives of all great men and women, it is that of faith in themselves.[19]

Faith, sympathy—fiery faith and fiery sympathy ! Life is nothing, death is nothing, hunger nothing, cold nothing. Glory unto the Lord—march on, the Lord is our General. Do not look back to see who falls—forward—onward ! Thus and thus we shall go on, brethren. One falls, and another takes up the work.[20]

Imitation, cowardly imitation, never makes for progress. It is verily the sign of awful degradation in a man. Ay, when a man has begun to hate himself, then the last blow has come.... Therefore have faith in yourselves, be proud of your ancestors, instead of being ashamed of them. And do not imitate, do not imitate ! Whenever you are under the thumb of others, you lose your own independence. If you are working, even in spiritual things, at the dictation of others, slowly you lose all faculty, even of thought. Bring out through your own

exertions what you have, but do not imitate, yet take what is good from others. We have to learn from others.... We have indeed many things to learn from others, yea, that man who refuses to learn is already dead.[21]

Work hard, be steady, and have faith in the Lord. Set to work.... Keep the motto before you—'Elevation of the masses without injuring their religion'.

Remember that the nation lives in the cottage. But, alas! nobody ever did anything for them.... Can you give them back their lost individuality without making them lose their innate spiritual nature? Can you become an occidental of occidentals in your spirit of equality, freedom, work, and energy, and at the same time a Hindu to the very backbone in religious culture and instincts? This is to be done and *we will do it*. You are all *born to do it*. Have faith in yourselves, great convictions are the mothers of great deeds.[22]

Perfect sincerity, holiness, gigantic intellect, and an all-conquering will. Let only a handful of men work with these, and the whole world will be revolutionized.[23]

Have faith in yourselves, and stand up on that faith and be strong; that is what we need.[24]

If a man, day and night, thinks he is miserable, low, and nothing, nothing he becomes. If you say yea, yea, 'I am, I am', so shall you be; and if you say 'I am not', think that you are not, and day and night meditate upon the fact that you are nothing, ay, nothing shall you be.... We are the children of the Almighty, we are sparks of the infinite, divine fire. How can we be nothings? We are everything, ready to do everything, we can do everything, and man must do everything.[25]

If you want to be great materially, believe that you are so. I may be a little bubble, and you may be a wave mountain-high, but know that for both of us the infinite ocean is the background, the infinite Brahman is our magazine of power and strength, and we can draw as much as we like, both of us, I the bubble and you the mountain-high wave. Believe, therefore, in yourselves.[26]

NATIONAL INTEGRATION

Integration—why ?

It is will that is the power.... Why is it, to take a case in point, that forty millions of Englishmen rule three hundred millions of people here ? What is the psychological explanation ? These forty millions put their wills together and that means infinite power, and you three hundred millions have a will each separate from the other. Therefore to make a great future India, the whole secret lies in organization, accumulation of power, co-ordination of wills.

Already before my mind rises one of the marvellous verses of the Atharva-Veda Samhita which says, 'Be thou all of one mind, be thou all of one thought, for in the days of yore, the gods being of one mind were enabled to receive oblations.' That the gods can be worshipped by men is because they are of one mind. Being of one mind is the secret of society. And the more you go on fighting and quarrelling about all trivialities such as 'Dravidian' and 'Aryan', and the question of Brahmins and non-Brahmins and all that, the further you are off from that accumulation of energy and power which is going to make the future India. For mark you, the future India depends entirely upon that. That is the secret—accumulation of will-power, co-ordination, bringing them all, as it were, into one focus. Each Chinaman thinks in his own way, and a handful of Japanese all think in the same way, and you know the result. That is how it goes throughout the history of the world.... All these dissensions must stop.[1]

Swamiji amidst Sikhs and Hindus in Punjab

This is the land which had first to bear the brunt of all inroads and invasions into India ; this heroic land had first to bare its bosom to every onslaught of the outer barbarians into Aryavarta. This is the land which, after all its sufferings, has not yet entirely lost its glory and its strength. Here it was that in later times the gentle Nanak preached his marvellous love for the world. Here it was that his broad heart was opened and his arms outstretched to embrace the whole world, not only of Hindus, but of Mohammedans too. Here it was that one of the last and one of the most glorious heroes of our race, Guru Govinda Singh, after shedding his blood and that of his dearest and nearest for the cause of religion, even when deserted by those for whom this blood was shed, retired into the South to die like a wounded lion struck to the heart, without a word against his country, without a single word of murmur.

Here, in this ancient land of ours, children of the land of five rivers, I stand before you, not as a teacher, for I know very little to teach, but as one who has come from the east to exchange words of greeting with the brothers of the west, to compare notes. Here am I, not to find out differences that exist among us, but to find where we agree. Here am I trying to understand on what ground we may always remain brothers, upon what foundations the voice that has spoken from eternity may become stronger and stronger as it grows. Here am I trying to propose to you something of constructive work and not destructive. For criticism the days are past, and we are waiting for constructive work....

Gentlemen, this is the motive that brings me before you, and at the start I may declare to you that I belong to no party and no sect. They are all great and glorious to me, I love them all, and all my life I have been attempting to find what is good and true in them ... if we can, a ground of agreement ; and if through the grace of the Lord

such a state of things be possible, let us take it up, and from theory carry it out into practice....

There have been sects enough in this country. There are sects enough, and there will be enough in the future.... Sects must be, but sectarianism need not. The World would not be the better for sectarianism, but the world cannot move on without having sects. One set of men cannot do everything. The almost infinite mass of energy in the world cannot be managed by a small number of people. Here, at once we see the necessity that forced this division of labour upon us—the division into sects. For the use of spiritual forces let there be sects ; but is there any need that we should quarrel when our most ancient books declare that this differentiation is only apparent, that in spite of all these differences there is a thread of harmony, that beautiful unity, running through them all ?...

Ask a man who wants to start a sectarian fight, 'Have you seen God ? Have you seen the Atman ? If you have not, what right have you to preach His name.' ... Let them follow their own path to realization so long as they struggle to see truth in their own hearts ; and when the broad, naked truth will be seen, then they will find that wonderful blissfulness which marvellously enough has been testified to by every seer in India, by everyone who has realized the truth. Then words of love alone will come out of that heart, for it has already been touched by Him who is the essence of Love Himself. Then and then alone, all sectarian quarrels will cease.[2]

On the Hindu-Muslim relation

This Vedantic spirit of religious liberality has very much affected Mohammedanism. Mohammedanism in India is quite a different thing from that in any other country. It is only when Mohammedans come from other countries and preach to their co-religionists in India about living with men who are not of their faith that a Mohammedan mob is aroused and fights.[3]

Whether we call it Vedantism or any ism, the truth is that Advaitism is the last word of religion and thought and the only position from which one can look upon all religions and sects with love. I believe it is the religion of the future enlightened humanity. The Hindus may get the credit of arriving at it earlier than other races, they being an older race than either the Hebrew or the Arab ; yet practical Advaitism, which looks upon and behaves to all mankind as one's own soul, was never developed among the Hindus universally.

On the other hand, my experience is that if ever any religion approached to this equality in an appreciable manner, it is Islam and Islam alone.

Therefore I am firmly persuaded that without the help of practical Islam, theories of Vedantism, however fine and wonderful they may be, are entirely valueless to the vast mass of mankind. We want to lead mankind to the place where there is neither the Vedas, nor the Bible, nor the Koran ; yet this has to be done by harmonising the Vedas, the Bible and the Koran. Mankind ought to be taught that religions are but the varied expressions of THE RELIGION, which is oneness, so that each may choose the path that suits him best.

For our own motherland a junction of the two great systems, Hinduism and Islam—Vedanta brain and Islam body—is the only hope.

I see in my mind's eye the future perfect India rising out of this chaos and strife, glorious and invincible, with Vedanta brain and Islam body.[4]

The colourful national fabric : Unity in diversity

A veritable ethnological museum ! Possibly, the half-ape skeleton of the recently discovered Sumatra link will be found on search here, too. The Dolmens are not wanting. Flint implements can be dug out almost anywhere. The lake-dwellers—at least the river-dwellers—must have been abundant at one time. The

cave-men and leaf-wearers still persist. The primitive hunters living in forests are in evidence in various parts of the country. Then there are the more historical varieties—the Negrito- Kolarian, the Dravidian, and the Aryan. To these have been added from time to time dashes of nearly all the known races, and a great many yet unknown—various breeds of Mongoloids, Mongols, Tartars, and the so-called Aryans of the philologists. Well, here are the Persian, the Greek, the Yunchi, the Hun, the Chin, the Scythian, and many more, melted and fused, the Jews, Parsees, Arabs, Mongols, down to the descendants of the Vikings and the lords of the German forests, yet undigested—an ocean of humanity, composed of these race-waves seething, boiling, struggling, constantly changing form, rising to the surface, and spreading, and swallowing little ones, again subsiding—this is the history of India.[5]

Race, religion, language, government—all these together make a nation. The elements which compose the nations of the world are indeed very few, taking race after race, compared to this country. Here have been the Aryan, the Dravidian, the Tartar, the Turk, the Mogul, the European—all the nations of the world, as it were, pouring their blood into this land. Of languages the most wonderful conglomeration is here; of manners and customs there is more difference between two Indian races than between the European and the Eastern races.

The one common ground that we have is our sacred tradition, our religion. That is the only common ground, and upon that we shall have to build. In Europe, political ideas form the national unity. In Asia, religious ideals form the national unity. The unity in religion, therefore, is absolutely necessary as the first condition of the future of India.[6]

We see how in Asia, and especially in India, race difficulties, linguistic difficulties, social difficulties, national difficulties, all melt away before this unifying

power of religion. We know that to the Indian mind there is nothing higher than religious ideals, that is the key-note of Indian life, and we can only work in the line of least resistance. It is not only true that the ideal of religion is the highest ideal ; in the case of India it is the only possible means of work ; work in any other line, without first strengthening this, would be disastrous. Therefore the first plank in the making of a future India, the first step that is to be hewn out of that rock of ages, is this unification of religion.[7]

For our national welfare, we must first seek out at the present day all the spiritual forces of the race, as was done in days of yore and will be done in all times to come. National union in India must be a gathering up of its scattered spiritual forces. A nation in India must be a union of those whose hearts beat to the same spiritual tune.[8]

The Christian is not to become a Hindu or a Buddhist, nor a Hindu or a Buddhist to become a Christian. But each must assimilate the spirit of the others and yet preserve his individuality and grow according to his own law of growth.[9]

Sects must be, but sectarianism need not.[10]

Key to integration

We know that our religion has certain common grounds, common to all our sects, however varying their conclusions may be, however different their claims may be. So there are certain common grounds ; and within their limitation this religion of ours admits of a marvellous variation, an infinite amount of liberty to think and live our own lives. We all know that, at least those of us who have thought ; and what we want is to bring out these life-giving common principles of our religion, and let every man, woman, and child, throughout the length and breadth of this country, understand them, know them, and try to bring them out

in their lives. This is the first step ; and, therefore, it has to be taken.[11]

Let us preach where we all agree and leave the differences to remedy themselves. As I have said to the Indian people again and again, if there is the darkness of centuries in a room and we go into the room and begin to cry, 'Oh, it is dark, it is dark !', will the darkness go ? Bring in the light and the darkness will vanish at once.[12]

THE TORCHBEARERS

The two ideals of truth—Shruti and Smriti

Two ideals of truth are in our scriptures ; the one is, what we call the eternal, and the other is not so authoritative, yet binding under particular circumstances, times, and places. The eternal relations which deal with the nature of the soul, and of God, and the relations between souls and God are embodied in what we call the Shrutis, the Vedas. The next set of truths is what we call the Smritis, as embodied in the words of Manu, Yajnavalkya, and other writers and also in the Puranas, down to the Tantras. The second class of books and teachings is subordinate to the Shrutis, inasmuch as whenever any one of these contradicts anything in the Shrutis, the Shrutis must prevail. This is the law. The idea is that the framework of the destiny and goal of man has been all delineated in the Vedas, the details have been left to be worked out in the Smritis and Puranas. As for general directions, the Shrutis are enough ; for spiritual life, nothing more can be said, nothing more can be known. All that is necessary has been known, all the advice that is necessary to lead the soul to perfection has been completed in the Shrutis ; the details alone were left out, and these the Smritis have supplied from time to time.

Another peculiarity is that these Shrutis have many sages as the recorders of the truths in them, mostly men, even some women. Very little is known of their personalities, the dates of their birth, and so forth, but their best thoughts, their best discoveries, I should say, are preserved there, embodied in the sacred literature of our

country, the Vedas. In the Smritis, on the other hand, personalities are more in evidence. Startling, gigantic, impressive, world-moving persons stand before us, as it were, for the first time, sometimes of more magnitude even than their teachings.

...but the very fountain-head of our religion is in the Shrutis, the Vedas, which are perfectly impersonal ; the persons all come in the Smritis and Puranas—the great Avataras, Incarnations of God, Prophets, and so forth.[1]

Who are the Rishis ?

The mass of knowledge called the Vedanta was discovered by personages called Rishis, and the Rishi is defined as a Mantra-drashta, a seer of thought ; not that the thought was his own. Whenever you hear that a certain passage of the Vedas came from a certain Rishi, never think that he wrote it or created it out of his mind ; he was the seer of the thought which already existed ; it existed in the universe eternally. This sage was the discoverer ; the Rishis were spiritual discoverers.[2]

Who are the Rishis ? The Rishi as he is called in the Upanishads is not an ordinary man, but a Mantra-drashta. He is a man who sees religion, to whom religion is not merely book-learning, not argumentation, nor speculation, nor much talking, but actual realization, a coming face to face with truths which transcend the senses. This is Rishihood.[3]

Consciousness is bound by the senses. Beyond that, beyond the senses, men must go in order to arrive at truths of the spiritual world, and there are even now persons who succeed in going beyond the bounds of the senses. These are called Rishis, because they come face to face with spiritual truths. The proof, therefore, of the Vedas is just the same as the proof of this table before me, Pratyaksha, direct perception. This I see with the senses, and the truths of spirituality we also see in a superconscious state of the human soul. This Rishi-state is not limited by time or place, by sex or race. Vatsyayana

boldly declares that this Rishihood is the common property of the descendants of the sage, of the Aryan, of the non-Aryan, of even the Mlechchha.

This is the sageship of the Vedas, and constantly we ought to remember this ideal of religion in India, which I wish other nations of the world would also remember and learn, so that there may be less fight and less quarrel. Religion is not in books, nor in theories, nor in dogmas, nor in talking, not even in reasoning. It is being and becoming. Ay, my friends, until each one of you has become a Rishi and come face to face with spiritual facts, religious life has not begun for you.[4]

Leaders of our societies have never been either generals or kings, but Rishis.... Rishihood does not belong to any age, or time, or even to sects or caste. Vatsyayana says, truth must be realized ; and we have to remember that you, and I, and every one of us will be called upon to become Rishis ; and we must have faith in ourselves ; we must become world-movers, for everything is in us. We must see Religion face to face, experience it, and thus solve our doubts about it ; and then standing up in the glorious light of Rishihood each one of us will be a giant ; and every word falling from our lips will carry behind it that infinite sanction of security.[5]

The Shruti and the clergy

Except our religion, every other religion in the world depends upon the life or lives of some personal founder or founders. Christianity is built upon the life of Jesus Christ, Mohammedanism upon Mohammed, Buddhism upon Buddha, Jainism upon the Jinas, and so on. It naturally follows that there must be in all these religions a good deal of fight about what they call the historical evidences of these great personalities. If at any time the historical evidences about the existence of these personages in ancient times become weak, the whole building of the religion tumbles down and is broken to pieces. We escaped this fate because our religion is not based upon

persons but on principles. That you obey your religion is not because it came through the authority of a sage, no, not even of an Incarnation. Krishna is not the authority of the Vedas, but the Vedas are the authority of Krishna himself. His glory is that he is the greatest preacher of the Vedas that ever existed. So with the other Incarnations ; so with all our sages.[6]

Our first principle is that all that is necessary for the perfection of man and for attaining unto freedom is there in the Vedas. You cannot find anything new. You cannot go beyond a perfect unity, which is the goal of all knowledge ; this has been already reached there, and it is impossible to go beyond the unity. Religious knowledge became complete when Tat Twam Asi (Thou art That) was discovered, and that was in the Vedas. What remained was the guidance of people from time to time according to different times and places, according to different circumstances and environments ; people had to be guided along the old, old path, and for this these great teachers came, these great sages. Nothing can bear out more clearly this position than the celebrated saying of Shri Krishna in the Gita : 'Whenever virtue subsides and irreligion prevails, I create Myself for the protection of the good ; for the destruction of all immorality I am coming from time to time.' This is the idea in India.[7]

Just as our God is an Impersonal and yet a Personal God, so is our religion a most intensely impersonal one—a religion based upon principles—and yet with an infinite scope for the play of persons ; for what religion gives you more Incarnations, more prophets and seers, and still waits for infinitely more ? The *Bhagavata* says that Incarnations are infinite, leaving ample scope for as many as you like to come.[8]

From the very earliest times, our sages have been feeling conscious of this fact that the vast majority of mankind require a personality. They must have a Personal God in some form or other. The very Buddha who declared against the existence of a personal God had not

died fifty years before his disciples manufactured a Personal God out of him. The Personal God is necessary, and at the same time we know that instead of and better than vain imaginations of a Personal God, ... we have in this world, living and walking in our midst, living Gods, now and then. These are more worthy of worship than any imaginary God, any creation of our imagination, that is to say, any idea of God which we can form. Shri Krishna is much greater than any idea of God you or I can have. Buddha is a much higher idea, a more living and idolised idea, than the ideal you or I can conceive of in our minds ; and therefore it is that they always command the worship of mankind even to the exclusion of all imaginary deities.

This our sages knew, and, therefore, left it open to all Indian people to worship such great personages, such Incarnations. Nay, the greatest of these Incarnations goes further : 'Wherever an extraordinary spiritual power is manifested by external man, know that I am there ; it is from Me that that manifestation comes.' That leaves the door open for the Hindu to worship the Incarnations of all the countries in the world. The Hindu can worship any sage and any saint from any country whatsoever.[9]

You may take up any one of the prophets or teachers as your guide and the object of your special adoration ; you are even allowed to think that he whom you have chosen is the greatest of the prophets, greatest of all the Avataras ; there is no harm in that, but you must keep to a firm background of eternally true principles. The strange fact here is that the power of our Incarnations has been holding good with us only so far as they are illustrations of the principles in the Vedas.[10]

Great religious personalities

In every nation's spiritual life, there is a fall as well as a rise. The nation goes down, and everything seems to go to pieces. Then, again, it gains strength, rises ; a huge wave comes, sometimes a tidal wave—and always on the

topmost crest of the wave is a shining soul, the Messenger. Creator and created by turns, he is the impetus that makes the wave rise, the nation rise : at the same time, he is created by the same forces which make the wave, acting and interacting by turns. He puts forth his tremendous power upon society ; and society makes him what he is. These are the great world-thinkers. These are the Prophets of the world, the Messengers of life, the Incarnations of God.[11]

Rama and Sita

Rama, the ancient idol of the heroic ages, the embodiment of truth, of morality, the ideal son, the ideal husband, the ideal father, and above all, the ideal king, this Rama has been presented before us by the great sage Valmiki.... And what to speak of Sita ? You may exhaust the literature of the world that is past, and I may assure you that you will have to exhaust the literature of the world of the future, before finding another Sita. Sita is unique ; that character was depicted once and for all. There may have been several Ramas, perhaps, but never more than one Sita ! She is the very type of the true Indian woman, for all the Indian ideals of a perfected woman have grown out of that one life of Sita.[12]

Rama was the soul of the old king ; but he was a king, and he could not go back on his word.[13]

Sita was chastity itself ; she would never touch the body of another man except that of her husband.

'Pure ? She is chastity itself', says Rama....

Rama gave up his body and joined Sita in the other world.

Sita—the pure, the pure, the all-suffering !

Sita is the name in India for everything that is good, pure, and holy ; everything that in woman we call woman. Sita—the patient, all-suffering, ever-faithful, ever-pure wife ! Through all the suffering she had, there was not one harsh word against Rama. Sita never returned injury. 'Be Sita !'[14]

Sri Krishna

He was the most wonderful Sannyasin, and the most wonderful householder in one; he had the most wonderful amount of Rajas, power, and was at the same time living in the midst of the most wonderful renunciation. Krishna can never be understood until you have studied the Gita, for he was the embodiment of his own teaching. Every one of these Incarnations came as a living illustration of what they came to preach. Krishna, the preacher of the Gita, was all his life the embodiment of that Song Celestial; he was the great illustration of non-attachment. He gives up his throne and never cares for it. He, the leader of India, at whose word kings come down from their thrones, never wants to be a king. He is the simple Krishna, ever the same Krishna who played with the Gopis. Ah, that most marvellous passage of his life, the most difficult to understand, and which none ought to attempt to understand until he has become perfectly chaste and pure, that most marvellous expansion of love, allegorised and expressed in that beautiful play at Vrindaban, which none can understand but he who has become mad with love, drunk deep of the cup of love! Who can understand the throes of the love of the Gopis—the very ideal of love, love that wants nothing, love that even does not care for heaven, love that does not care for anything in this world or the world to come?... They hated every adjective that was applied to Krishna; they did not care to know that he was the Lord of creation, they did not care to know that he was almighty, they did not care to know that he was omnipotent, and so forth. The only thing they understood was that he was infinite Love, that was all. The Gopis understood Krishna only as the Krishna of Vrindaban. He, the leader of the hosts, the King of kings, to them was the shepherd, and the shepherd for ever. 'I do not want wealth, nor many people, nor do I want learning; no, not even do I want to go to heaven. Let me be born again and again, but Lord, grant me this, that I may have love for Thee, and that for

love's sake.' A great landmark in the history of religion is here, the ideal of love for love's sake, work for work's sake, duty for duty's sake, and it for the first time fell from the lips of the greatest of Incarnations, Krishna, and for the first time in the history of humanity, upon the soil of India. The religions of fear and of temptations were gone for ever, and in spite of the fear of hell and temptation of enjoyment in heaven, came the grandest of ideals, love for love's sake, duty for duty's sake, work for work's sake.

And what a love ! I have told you just now that it is very difficult to understand the love of the Gopis.... Ay, forget first the love for gold, and name and fame, and for this little trumpery world of ours. Then, only then, you will understand the love of the Gopis, too holy to be attempted without giving up everything, too sacred to be understood until the soul has become perfectly pure. People with ideas of sex, and of money, and of fame, bubbling up every minute in the heart, daring to criticize and understand the love of the Gopis !

That is the very essence of the Krishna Incarnation. Even the Gita, the great philosophy itself, does not compare with that madness, for in the Gita the disciple is taught slowly how to walk towards the goal, but here is the madness of enjoyment, the drunkenness of love, where disciples and teachers and teachings and books and all these things have become one ; even the ideas of fear, and God, and heaven—everything has been thrown away. What remains is the madness of love. It is forgetfulness of everything, and the lover sees nothing in the world except that Krishna and Krishna alone, when the face of every being becomes a Krishna, when his own face looks like Krishna, when his own soul has become tinged with the Krishna colour. That was the great Krishna !

There may be many historical discrepancies, there may be interpolations in the life of Krishna. All these things may be true ; but, at the same time, there must have been a basis, a foundation for this new and tremendous departure. Taking the life of any other sage or prophet, we

find that that prophet is only the evolution of what had gone before him, we find that that prophet is only preaching the ideas that had been scattered about his own country even in his own times. Great doubts may exist even as to whether that prophet existed or not. But here, I challenge any one to show whether these things, these ideals—work for work's sake, love for love's sake, duty for duty's sake, were not original ideas with Krishna, and as such, there must have been someone with whom these ideas originated. They could not have been borrowed from anybody else. They were not floating about in the atmosphere when Krishna was born. But the Lord Krishna was the first preacher of this ; his disciple Vyasa took it up and preached it unto mankind....

From that ideal lover we come down to the lower stratum of Krishna, the preacher of the Gita. Than the Gita no better commentary on the Vedas has been written or can be written. The essence of the Shrutis, or of the Upanishads, is hard to be understood, seeing that there are so many commentators, each one trying to interpret in his own way. Then the Lord Himself comes, He who is the inspirer of the Shrutis, to show us the meaning of them, as the preacher of the Gita, and today India wants nothing better, the world wants nothing better than that method of interpretation.... One non-dualistic commentator takes up an Upanishad ; there are so many dualistic passages, and he twists and tortures them into some meaning, and wants to bring them all into a meaning of his own. If a dualistic commentator comes, there are so many non-dualistic texts which he begins to torture, to bring them all round to dualistic meaning. But you find in the Gita there is no attempt at torturing any one of them.[15]

The central figure of the Gita is Krishna.... Krishna, perhaps, has a larger number of followers in India than any other Incarnation of God. His followers hold that he was the most perfect of those Incarnations. Why ? 'Because', they say, 'look at Buddha and other Incarnations : they were only monks, and they had no

sympathy for married people. How could they have ? But look at Krishna : he was great as a son, as a king, as a father, and all through his life he practised the marvellous teachings which he preached.' 'He who in the midst of the greatest activity finds the sweetest peace, and in the midst of the greatest calmness is most active, he has known the secret of life.' Krishna shows the way how to do this—by being non-attached : do everything but do not get identified with anything. You are the soul, the pure, the free, all the time ; you are the witness. Our misery comes, not from work, but by our getting attached to something. Take for instance, money : money is a great thing to have, earn it, says Krishna ; struggle hard to get money, but don't get attached to it. So with children, with wife, husband, relatives, fame, everything ; you have no need to shun them, only don't get attached. There is only one attachment and that belongs to the Lord, and to none other. Work for them, love them, do good to them, sacrifice a hundred lives, if need be, for them, but never be attached. His own life was the exact exemplification of that.[16]

Gautama Buddha

A rather sadder chapter of India's history comes now. In the Gita we already hear the distant sound of the conflicts of sects, and the Lord comes in the middle to harmonise them all ; He, the great preacher of harmony, the greatest teacher of harmony, Lord Shri Krishna. He says, 'In Me they are all strung like pearls upon a thread.' We already hear the distant sounds, the murmurs of the conflict, and possibly there was a period of harmony and calmness, when it broke out anew not only on religious grounds, but most possibly on caste grounds—the fight between the two powerful factors in our community, the kings and the priests. And from the topmost crest of the wave that deluged India for nearly a thousand years, we see another glorious figure, and that was our Goutama Shakyamuni. You all know about his teachings and

preachings. We worship him as God incarnate, the greatest, the boldest preacher of morality that the world ever saw, the greatest Karma-Yogi ; as disciple of himself, as it were, the same Krishna came to show how to make his theories practical.[17]

At the time Buddha was born, India was in need of a great spiritual leader, a prophet. There was already a most powerful body of priests.... Priests believe that there is a God, but that this God can be approached and known only through them....

But while the priests were flourishing, there existed also the poet-prophets called Sannyasins.... So these poet-prophets of ancient India repudiated the ways of the priest and declared the pure truth. They tried to break the power of the priests, and they succeeded a little. But in two generations their disciples went back to the supertitious—roundabout ways of the priests—became priests themselves : 'You can get truth only through us !' Truth became crystallized again, and again prophets came to break the encrustations and free the truth, and so it went on. Yes, there must be all the time the man, the prophet, or else humanity will die.

...The priests are the only people fit for the truth ! The masses are not fit for it ! It must be diluted ! Water it down a little !

Take the Sermon on the Mount and the Gita—they are simplicity itself. Even the streetwalker can understand them. How grand ! In them you find the truth clearly and simply revealed. But no, the priests would not accept that truth can be found so directly. They speak of two thousand heavens and two thousand hells. If people follow their prescriptions, they will go to heaven ! If they do not obey the rules, they will go to hell !

But the people shall learn the truth. Some are afraid that if the full truth is given to all, it will hurt them. They should not be given the unqualified truth—so they say. But the world is not much better off by compromising truth. What worse can it be than it is already ? Bring truth

out ! If it is real, it will do good. When people protest and propose other methods, they only make apologies for witchcraft.

India was full of it in Buddha's day. There were the masses of people, and they were debarred from all knowledge. If just a word of the Vedas entered the ears of a man, terrible punishment was visited upon him. The priests had made a secret of the Vedas—the Vedas that contained the spiritual truths discovered by the ancient Hindus !

At last one man could bear it no more. He had the brain, the power, and the heart—a heart as infinite as the broad sky. He felt how the masses were being led by the priests and how the priests were glorying in their power, and he wanted to do something about it. He did not want any power over any one, and he wanted to break the mental and spiritual bonds of men. His heart was large. The heart, many around us may have, and we also want to help others. But we do not have the brain ; we do not know the ways and means by which help can be given. But this man had the brain to discover the means of breaking the bondages of souls. He learnt why men suffer, and he found the way out of suffering. He was a man of accomplishment, he worked everything out ; he taught one and all without distinction and made them realize the peace of enlightenment. This was the man Buddha....

He taught the very gist of the philosophy of the Vedas to one and all without distinction, he taught it to the world at large, because one of his great messages was the equality of man. Men are all equal. No concession there to anybody ! Buddha was the great preacher of equality. Every man and woman has the same right to attain spirituality—that was his teaching. The difference between the priests and the other castes he abolished. Even the lowest were entitled to the highest attainments ; he opened the door of Nirvana to one and all....

His doctrine was this : why is there misery in our life ? Because we are selfish. We desire things for ourselves—

that is why there is misery. What is the way out ? The giving up of the self. The self does not exist ; the phenomenal world, all this that we perceive, is all that exists. There is nothing called soul underlying the cycle of life and death. There is the stream of thought, one thought following another in succession, each thought coming into existence and becoming non-existent at the same moment, that is all ; there is no thinker of the thought, no soul. The body is changing all the time ; so is mind, consciousness. The self therefore is a delusion. All selfishness comes of holding on to the self, to this illusory self. If we know the truth that there is no self, then we will he happy and make others happy.

This was what Buddha taught. And he did not merely talk ; he was ready to give up his own life for the world.[18]

He was the only man who was ever ready to give up his life for animals, to stop a sacrifice. He once said to a king, 'If the sacrifice of a lamb helps you to go to heaven, sacrificing a man will help you better ; so sacrifice me.' The king was astonished.[19]

He said : 'This animal sacrifice is another superstition. God and soul are the two big superstitions. God is only a superstition invented by the priests. If there is a God, as these Brahmins preach, why is there so much misery in the world ? He is just like me, a slave to the law of causation. If he is not bound by the law of causation, then why does he create ? Such a God is not at all satisfactory. There is the ruler in heaven that rules the universe according to his sweet will and leaves us all here to die in misery—he never has the goodness to look at us for a moment. Our whole life is continuous suffering ; but this is not sufficient punishment—after death we must go to places where we have other punishments. Yet we continually perform all kinds of rites and ceremonies to please this creator of the world !'

Buddha said : 'These ceremonials are all wrong. There is but one ideal in the world. Destroy all delusions ; what is true will remain. As soon as the clouds are gone, the

sun will shine.' How to kill the self ? Become perfectly unselfish, ready to give up your life even for an ant. Work not for any superstition, not to please any God, not to get any reward, but because you are seeking your own release by killing your self. Worship and prayer and all that, these are all nonsense. You all say, 'I thank God'—but where does He live ? You do not know, and yet you are all going crazy about God.

Hindus can give up everything except their God. To deny God is to cut off the very ground from under the feet of devotion. Devotion and God the Hindus must cling to....

Yet the religion of Buddha spread fast. It was because of the marvellous love which, for the first time in the history of humanity, overflowed a large heart and devoted itself to the service not only of all men but of all living things—a love which did not care for anything except to find a way of release from suffering for all beings.

Man was loving God and had forgotten all about his brother man. The man who in the name of God can give up his very life, can also turn around and kill his brother man in the name of God. That was the state of the world. They would sacrifice the son for the glory of God, would rob nations for the glory of God, would kill thousands of beings for the glory of God, would drench the earth with blood for the glory of God. This was the first time they turned to the other God—man. It is man that is to be loved. It was the first wave of intense love for all men—the first wave of true unadulterated wisdom—that, starting from India, gradually inundated country after country, north, south, east, west....

All my life I have been very fond of Buddha.... I have more veneration for that character than for any other—that boldness, that fearlessness, and that tremendous love ! He was born for the good of men. Others may seek God, others may seek truth for themselves ; he did not even care to know truth for himself. He sought truth

because people were in misery. How to help them, that was his only concern. Throughout his life he never had a thought for himself....

If he was great in life, he was also great in death. He ate food offered to him by a member of a race similar to your American Indians. Hindus do not touch them because they eat everything indiscriminately. He told his disciples, 'Do not eat this food, but I cannot refuse it. Go to the man and tell him he has done me one of the greatest services of my life—he has released me from the body.' An old man came and sat near him—he had walked miles and miles to see the Master—and Buddha taught him. When he found a disciple weeping, he reproved him, saying, 'What is this ? Is this the result of all my teaching ? Let there be no false bondage, no dependence on me, no false glorification of this passing personality. The Buddha is not a person ; he is a realization. Work out your own salvation.'

Even when dying, he would not claim any distinction for himself. I worship him for that.[20]

Shankaracharya

There was an element of danger in the teaching of Buddha—it was a reforming religion. In order to bring about the tremendous spiritual change he did, he had to give many negative teachings. But if a religion emphasises the negative side too much, it is in danger of eventual destruction. Never can a reforming sect survive if it is only reforming ; the formative elements alone—the real impulse, that is, the principles—live on and on. After a reform has been brought about, it is the positive side that should be emphasised : after the building is finished the scaffolding must be taken away.

It so happened in India that as time went on, the followers of Buddha emphasised the negative aspect of his teachings too much and thereby caused the eventual downfall of their religion.[21]

I have neither the time nor the inclination to describe

to you the hideousness that came in the wake of Buddhism. The most hideous ceremonies, the most horrible, the most obscene books that human hands ever wrote or the human brain ever conceived, the most bestial forms that ever passed under the name of religion, have all been the creation of degraded Buddhism.[22]

But India has to live, and the spirit of the Lord descended again. He who declared, 'I will come whenever virtue subsides', came again, and this time the manifestation was in the South, and up rose that young Brahmin of whom it has been declared that at the age of sixteen he had completed all his writings ; the marvellous boy Shankaracharya arose. The writings of this boy of sixteen are the wonders of the modern world, and so was the boy. He wanted to bring back the Indian world to its pristine purity, but think of the amount of the task before him. [I have told you a few points about the state of things that existed in India.] ... The Tartars and the Baluchis and all the hideous races of mankind came to India and became Buddhists, and assimilated with us, and brought their national customs, and the whole of our national life became a huge page of the most horrible and the most bestial customs. That was the inheritance which that boy got from the Buddhists, and from that time to this, the whole work in India is a reconquest of this Buddhistic degradation by the Vedanta. It is still going on, it is not yet finished. Shankara came, a great philosopher, and showed that the real essence of Buddhism and that of the Vedanta are not very different, but that the disciples did not understand the Master and have degraded themselves, denied the existence of the soul and of God, and have become atheists. That was what Shankara showed, and all the Buddhists began to come back to the old religion.

...Shankara, with his great intellect, I am afraid, had not as great a heart.... I do not know why Shankara should be represented as rather exclusive ; I do not find anything in his writings which is exclusive. As in the case of the

declarations of the Lord Buddha, this exclusiveness that has been attributed to Shankara's teachings is most possibly not due to his teachings, but to the incapacity of his disciples.[23]

Ramanuja

Then came the brilliant Ramanuja.... Ramanuja's heart was greater. He felt for the downtrodden, he sympathised with them. He took up the ceremonies, the accretions that had gathered, made them pure so far as they could be, and instituted new ceremonies, new methods of worship, for the people who absolutely required them. At the same time he opened the door to the highest spiritual worship from the Brahmin to the Pariah. That was Ramanuja's work....

You may mark one characteristic since the time of Ramanuja—the opening of the door of spirituality to every one.[24]

Sri Chaitanya

This one great Northern sage, Chaitanya, represented the mad love of the Gopis. Himself a Brahmin, born of one of the most rationalistic families of the day, himself a professor of logic fighting and gaining a word-victory—for, this he had learnt from his childhood as the highest ideal of life—and yet through the mercy of some sage the whole life of that man became changed ; he gave up his fight, his quarrels, his professorship of logic and became one of the greatest teachers of Bhakti the world has ever known—mad Chaitanya. His Bhakti rolled over the whole land of Bengal, bringing solace to every one. His love knew no bounds. The saint or the sinner, the Hindu or the Mohammedan, the pure or the impure, the prostitute, the streetwalker—all had a share in his love, all had a share in his mercy ; and even to the present day, although greatly degenerated, as everything does become in time, his sect is the refuge of the poor, of the downtrodden, of the

outcast, of the weak, of those who have been rejected by all society.[25]

Shri Chaitanya was a man of tremendous renunciation and had nothing to do with woman and carnal appetites. But, in later times, his disciples admitted women into their order, mixed indiscriminately with them in his name, and made an awful mess of the whole thing. And the ideal of love which the Lord exemplified in his life was perfectly selfless and bereft of any vestige of lust ; that sexless love can never be the property of the masses. But the subsequent Vaishnava Gurus, instead of laying particular stress first on the aspect of renunciation in the Master's life, bestowed all their zeal on preaching and infusing his ideal of love among the masses, and the consequence was that the common people could not grasp and assimilate that high ideal of divine love, and naturally made of it the worst form of love between man and woman.... There can be no love so long as there is lust—even a speck of it, as it were, in the heart. None but men of great renunciation, none but mighty giants among men, have a right to that Love Divine. If that highest ideal of love is held out to the masses, it will indirectly tend to stimulate its worldly prototype which dominates the heart of man—for, meditating on love to God by thinking of oneself as His wife or beloved, one would very likely be thinking most of the time of one's own wife.[26]

Sri Ramakrishna

The one (Shankara) had a great head, the other (Chaitanya and Ramanuja) a large heart, and the time was ripe for one to be born, the embodiment of both this head and heart ; the time was ripe for one to be born who in one body would have the brilliant intellect of Shankara and the wonderfully expansive, infinite heart of Chaitanya ; one who would see in every sect the same spirit working, the same God ; one who would see God in every being, one whose heart would weep for the poor, for the weak, for the outcast, for the downtrodden, for

every one in this world, inside India or outside India ; and at the same time whose grand brilliant intellect would conceive of such noble thoughts as would harmonise all conflicting sects, not only in India but outside of India, and bring a marvellous harmony, the universal religion of head and heart into existence. Such a man was born, and I had the good fortune to sit at his feet for years. The time was ripe, it was necessary that such a man should be born, and he came ; and the most wonderful part of it was that his life's work was just near a city which was full of Western thought, a city which had run mad after these occidental ideas, a city which had become more Europeanised than any other city in India. There he lived, without any book-learning whatsoever ; this great intellect never learnt even to write his own name,* but the most brilliant graduates of our University found in him an intellectual giant. He was a strange man, this Shri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa.[27]

This man came to live near Calcutta, the capital of India, the most important university town in our country which was sending out sceptics and materialists by the hundreds every year. Yet many of these university men, sceptics, and agnostics, used to come and listen to him. I heard of this man, and I went to hear him. He looked just like an ordinary man, with nothing remarkable about him. He used the most simple language, and I thought, 'Can this man be a great teacher ?'—crept near to him and asked him the question which I had been asking others all my life : 'Do you believe in God, Sir ?' 'Yes,' he replied. 'Can you prove it, Sir ?' 'Yes.' 'How ?' 'Because I see him just as I see you here, only in a much intenser sense.' That impressed me at once. For the first time I found a man who dared to say that he saw God, that religion was a reality, to be felt, to be sensed in an infinitely more intense

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* Later research has shown that although Shri Ramakrishna was almost illiterate in the Western sense, he could read and write Bengali.

way than we can sense the world. I began to go to that man, day after day, and I actually saw that religion could be given. One touch, one glance, can change a whole life.... When I myself saw this man, all scepticism was brushed aside.[28]

In the presence of my Master I found out that man could be perfect, even in this body. Those lips never cursed anyone, never even criticized any one. Those eyes were beyond the possibility of seeing evil, that mind had lost the power of thinking evil. He saw nothing but good. That tremendous purity, that tremendous renunciation is the one secret of spirituality.[29]

How can great spirituality come without that renunciation ? Renunciation is the background of all religious thought wherever it be, and you will always find that as this idea of renunciation lessens, the more will the senses creep into the field of religion, and spirituality will decrease in the same ratio.

That man was the embodiment of renunciation. In our country it is necessary for a man who becomes a Sannyasin to give up all worldly wealth and position, and this my Master carried out literally. There were many who would have felt themselves blest if he would only have accepted a present from their hands, who would gladly have given him thousands of rupees if he would have taken them, but these were the only men from whom he would turn away. He was a triumphant example, a living realization of the complete conquest of lust and of desire for money. He was beyond all ideas of either, and such men are necessary for this century.[30]

We hear in the West about worshipping woman, but this is usually for her youth and beauty. This man meant by worshipping woman, that to him every woman's face was that of the Blissful Mother, and nothing but that. I myself have seen this man standing before those women whom society would not touch, and falling at their feet bathed in tears, saying, 'Mother, in one form Thou art in the street, and in another form Thou art the universe. I

salute Thee, Mother, I salute Thee.' Think of the blessedness of that life from which all carnality has vanished, which can look upon every woman with that love and reverence, when every woman's face becomes transfigured, and only the face of the Divine Mother, the Blissful One, the Protectress of the human race, shines upon it !... Such purity is absolutely necessary if real spirituality is to be attained.[31]

The other idea of his life was intense love for others. The first part of my Master's life was spent in acquiring spirituality, and the remaining years in distributing it.... So men came in crowds to hear him, and he would talk twenty hours in the twenty-four, and that not for one day, but for months and months until at last the body broke down under the pressure of this tremendous strain. His intense love for mankind would not let him refuse to help even the humblest of the thousands who sought his aid. Gradually there developed a vital throat disorder, and yet he could not be persuaded to refrain from these exertions. As soon as he heard that people were asking to see him, he would insist upon having them admitted, and would answer all their questions. When expostulated with, he replied, 'I do not care. I will give up twenty thousand such bodies to help one man. It is glorious to help even one man.'[32]

If I have told you one word of truth, it was his and his alone, and if I have told you many things which were not true, which were not correct, which were not beneficial to the human race, they were all mine, and on me is the responsibility.[33]

In order that a nation may rise, it must have a high ideal. Now, that ideal is, of course, the abstract Brahman. But as you all cannot be inspired by an abstract ideal, you must have a personal ideal. You have got that in the person of Shri Ramakrishna. The reason why other personages cannot be our ideal now is, that their days are gone ; and in order that Vedanta may come to everyone, there must be a person who is in sympathy with the

present generation. This is fulfilled in Shri Ramakrishna. So now you should place him before everyone. Whether one accepts him as a Sadhu or an avatar does not matter.[34]

God, though everywhere, can be known to us in and through human character. No character was ever so perfect as Ramakrishna, and that should be the centre round which we ought to rally ; at the same time allowing everybody to regard him in his own light, either as God, Saviour, teacher, model, or a great man, just as he pleases.[35]

In a narrow society there is depth and intensity of spirituality. The narrow stream is very rapid. In a catholic society, along with the breadth of vision we find a proportionate loss in depth and intensity. But the life of Shri Ramakrishna upsets all records of history. It is a remarkable phenomenon that in Shri Ramakrishna there has been an assemblage of ideas deeper than the sea and vaster than the skies.

We must interpret the Vedas in the light of the experience of Shri Ramakrishna.... As, in the olden times, it was the Lord alone, the deliverer of the Gita, who partially harmonized these apparently conflicting statements, so with a view to completely settling this dispute, immensely magnified in the process of time, He Himself has come as Shri Ramakrishna. Therefore no one can truly understand the Vedas and Vedanta, unless one studies them in the light of the utterances of Shri Ramakrishna—who first exemplified in his life and taught that these scriptural statements which appear to the cursory view as contradictory, are meant for different grades of aspirants and are arranged in the order of evolution....

If there is anything which Shri Ramakrishna has urged us to give up as carefully as lust and wealth, it is the limiting of the infinitude of God by circumscribing it within narrow bounds....

Such a unique personality, such a synthesis of the utmost of Jnana, Yoga, Bhakti and Karma, has never

before appeared among mankind. The life of Shri Ramakrishna proves that the greatest breadth, the highest catholicity and the utmost intensity can exist side by side in the same individual, and that society also can be constructed like that, for society is nothing but an aggregate of individuals.

He is the true disciple and follower of Shri Ramakrishna, whose character is perfect and all-sided like this. The formation of such a perfect character is the ideal of this age, and everyone should strive for that alone.[36]

So now the great conclusion is that Ramakrishna has no peer; nowhere else in this world exists that unprecedented perfection, that wonderful kindness for all that does not stop to justify itself, that intense sympathy for man in bondage.[37]

Without studying Ramakrishna Paramahamsa first, one can never understand the real import of the Vedas, the Vedanta, of the *Bhagavata* and the other Puranas. His life is a searchlight of infinite power thrown upon the whole mass of Indian religious thought. He was the living commentary to the Vedas and to their aim. He had lived in one life the whole cycle of the national religious existence in India.[38]

Ramakrishna Paramahamsa is the latest and the most perfect—the concentrated embodiment of knowledge, love, renunciation, catholicity, and the desire to serve mankind. So where is anyone to compare with him? He must have been born in vain who cannot appreciate him. My supreme good fortune is that I am his servant through life after life. A single word of his is to me far weightier than the Vedas and the Vedanta. तस्य दासदासदासोऽहम्—Oh, I am the servant of the servants of his servants. But narrow bigotry militates against his principles, and this makes me cross. Rather let his name be drowned in oblivion, and his teachings bear fruit instead! Why, was he a slave to fame?[39]

From the day Shri Ramakrishna was born dates the growth of modern India and of the Golden Age.[40]

In the Ramakrishna Incarnation there is knowledge, devotion, and love—infinite knowledge, infinite love, infinite work, infinite compassion for all beings. You have not yet been able to understand him.... What the whole Hindu race has thought in ages, he *lived* in one life. His life is the living commentary to the Vedas of all nations.[41]

India has suffered long, the Religion Eternal has suffered long. But the Lord is merciful. Once more He has come to help His children, once more the opportunity is given to rise to fallen India. India can only rise by sitting at the feet of Shri Ramakrishna. His life and his teachings are to be spread far and wide, are to be made to penetrate every pore of Hindu society. Who will do it ? Who are to take up the flag of Ramakrishna and march for the salvation of the world ? Who are to stem the tide of degeneration at the sacrifice of name and fame, wealth and enjoyment—nay of every hope of this or other worlds ?... Glory unto him on whom falls the Lord's choice.[42]

Ramakrishna Paramahamsa came for the good of the world. Call him a man, or God, or an Incarnation, just as you please. Accept him each in your own light. He who will bow before him will be converted into purest gold that very moment. Go with this message from door to door, if you can, my boy, and all your disquietude will be at an end.[43]

We must electrify society, electrify the world. Idle gossip and barren ceremonials won't do.... A huge spiritual tidal wave is coming—he who is low shall become noble, and he who is ignorant shall become the teacher of great scholars—through HIS grace. उत्तिष्ठत जाग्रत प्राप्य वरान्निबोधत—'Arise ! Awake ! And stop not till the goal is reached.' Life is ever expanding, contraction is death. The Self-seeking man who is looking after his personal comforts and leading a lazy life—there is no room for him even in hell. He alone is a child of Shri Ramakrishna who is moved to pity for all creatures and exerts himself for them even at the risk of incurring personal damnation, इतरे

कृपणाः—'others are vulgar people'. Whoever, at this great spiritual juncture, will stand up with a courageous heart and go on spreading from door to door, from village to village, his message, is alone my brother, and a son of His. This is the test, he who is Ramakrishna's child does not seek his personal good, प्राणात्ययेऽपि परकल्याणचिकीर्षवः—'They wish to do good to others even when at the point of death.'[44]

All that I am, all that the world itself will some day be, is owing to my Master, Shri Ramakrishna.[45]

STIRRING UTTERANCES

Bold words and bolder deeds are what we want. Awake, awake, great ones ! The world is burning with misery. Can you sleep ? Let us call and call till the sleeping gods awake, till the God within answers to the call. What more is in life ? What greater work ?[1]

Bear in mind, my children, that only cowards and those who are weak commit sin and tell lies. The brave are always moral. Try to be moral, try to be brave, try to be sympathizing.[2]

Come, be men ! Come out of your narrow holes and have a look abroad. See how nations are on the march ! Do you love man ? Do you love your country ? Then come, let us struggle for higher and better things ; look not back, no, not even if you see the dearest and nearest cry. Look not back, but forward !

India wants the sacrifice of at least a thousand of her young men—men, mind, and not brutes.[3]

Calm and silent and steady work, and no newspaper humbug, no name-making, you must always remember.[4]

Can you become an occidental of occidentals in your spirit of equality, freedom, work, and energy, and at the same time a Hindu to the very backbone in religious culture and instincts ? This is to be done and *we will do it*. You are all *born to do it*. Have faith in yourselves, great convictions are the mothers of great deeds. Onward for ever ! Sympathy for the poor, the downtrodden, even unto death—this is our motto.

Onward, brave lads ![5]

Three things are necessary to make every man great, every nation great :

1. Conviction of the powers of goodness.
2. Absence of jealousy and suspicion.
3. Helping all who are trying to be and do good.[6]

Do not wait for anybody or anything. Do whatever you can. Build your hope on none.[7]

Great things can be done by great sacrifices only. No selfishness, no name, no fame, yours or mine, nor my Master's even ! Work, work the idea, the plan, my boys, my brave, noble, good souls—to the wheel, to the wheel put your shoulders ! Stop not to look back for name, or fame, or any such nonsense. Throw self overboard and work.[8]

'Wake up, stop not until the goal is reached', say the Vedas. Up, up, the long night is passing, the day is approaching, the wave has risen, nothing will be able to resist its tidal fury. The spirit, my boys, the spirit ; the love, my children, the love ; the faith, the belief ; and fear not ! The greatest sin is fear.[9]

Do not be afraid of a small beginning, great things come afterwards. Be courageous. Do not try to lead your brethren, but serve them. The brutal mania for leading has sunk many a great ship in the waters of life. Take care especially of that, i.e. be unselfish even unto death, and work.[10]

Work hard. Be holy and pure and the fire will come.[11]

Have faith that you are all, my brave lads, born to do great things ! Let not the barks of puppies frighten you—no, not even the thunderbolts of heaven—but stand up and work ![12]

Let people say whatever they like, stick to your own convictions, and rest assured, the world will be at your feet. They say, 'Have faith in this fellow or that fellow', but I say, 'Have faith in yourself first', that's the way.[13]

Say, 'I can do everything.' 'Even the poison of a snake is powerless if you can firmly deny it.'[14]

To work with undaunted energy ! What fear ! Who is powerful enough to thwart you ! ... Fear ! Whom to fear, forsooth ![15]

Renunciation !—Renunciation !—you must preach this above everything else. There will be no spiritual strength unless one renounces the world.[16]

माभैः माभैः—Courage ! Everything will come about by degrees. From all of you I want this that you must discard forever self-aggrandisement, faction-mongering, and jealousy. You must be all-forbearing, like Mother-Earth. If you can achieve this, the world will be at your feet.[17]

Whatever others think or do, lower not your standard of purity, morality and love of God.... No one who loves God need fear any jugglery. Holiness is the highest and divinest power in earth and in heaven.[18]

I do not believe in a God or religion which cannot wipe the widow's tears or bring a piece of bread to the orphan's mouth. However sublime be the theories, however well-spun may be the philosophy—I do not call it religion so long as it is confined to books and dogmas. The eye is in the forehead and not in the back. Move onward and carry into practice that which you are very proud to call your religion, and God bless you ![19]

No man, no nation, my son, can hate others and live ; India's doom was sealed the very day they invented the word *mlechchha* and stopped from communion with others. Take care how you foster that idea. It is good to talk glibly about the Vedanta, but how hard to carry out even its least precepts ![20]

A Sannyasin who has no idea of doing good to his fellows is a brute, not a Sannyasin.[21]

I call him a traitor who, having been educated, nursed in luxury by the heart's blood of the downtrodden millions of toiling poor, never even takes a thought for them. Where, in what period of history your rich men, noblemen, your priests and potentates took any thought for the poor—the grinding of whose faces is the very life-blood of their power ?[22]

Who thinks of raising these sunken downtrodden millions ? A few thousand graduates do not make a nation, a few rich men do not make a nation. True, our

opportunities are less, but still there is enough to feed and clothe and make 300 millions more comfortable, nay, luxurious.[23]

The only way is love and sympathy. The only worship is love.[24]

I am thoroughly convinced that no individual or nation can live by holding itself apart from the community of others, and whenever such an attempt has been made under false ideas of greatness, policy, or holiness—the result has always been disastrous to the secluding one.[25]

Give and take is the law, and if India wants to raise herself once more, it is absolutely necessary that she brings out her treasures and throws them broadcast among the nations of the earth, and in return be ready to receive what others have to give her. Expansion is life, contraction is death. Love is life and hatred is death.[26]

Do any deserve liberty who are not ready to give it to others ? Let us calmly and in a manly fashion go to work, instead of dissipating our energy in unnecessary frettings and fumings. I, for one, thoroughly believe that no power in the universe can withhold from any one anything he really deserves. The past was great no doubt, but I sincerely believe that the future will be more glorious still.[27]

It is life to do good, it is death not to do good to others. Ninety per cent of human brutes you see are dead, are *ghosts*—for none lives, my boys, but he who loves. Feel, my children, feel ; feel for the poor, the ignorant, the downtrodden, feel till the heart stops and the brain reels and you think you will go mad.[28]

Be not afraid, my children. Look not up in that attitude of fear towards that infinite starry vault as if it would crush you. Wait ! In a few hours more the whole of it will be under your feet. Wait, money does not pay, nor name ; fame does not pay, nor learning. It is love that pays ; it is character that cleaves its way through adamantine walls of difficulties.[29]

Bread ! Bread ! I do not believe in a God who cannot give me bread here, giving me eternal bliss in heaven ! Pooh ! India is to be raised, the poor are to be fed, education is to be spread, and the evil of priestcraft is to be removed. No priestcraft, no social tyranny ! More bread, more opportunity for everybody ![30]

Have fire and spread all over. Work, work. Be the servant while leading, be unselfish, and *never listen to one friend in private accusing another*. Have infinite patience, and success is yours.[31]

Onward, my brave boys—money or no money—men or no men ! Have you love ? Have you God ? Onward, and forward to the breach, you are irresistible.[32]

Nothing shall be done in haste. Purity, patience, and perseverance are the three essentials to success and, above all, *love*. All time is yours, there is no indecent haste. Everything will come right if you are pure and sincere. We want hundreds like you bursting upon society and bringing new life and vigour of the Spirit wherever they go.[33]

Pay no attention whatsoever to newspaper nonsense or criticism. Be sincere and do your duty. Everything will come all right. Truth must triumph.[34]

You must give your body, mind, and speech to 'the welfare of the world'. You have read—मातृदेवो भव पितृदेवो भव—'Look upon your mother as God, look upon your father as God,'—but I say, दरिद्रदेवो भव, मूर्खदेवो भव—the poor, the illiterate, the ignorant, the afflicted—let these be your God. Know that service to these alone is the highest religion.[35]

Do not try to be a ruler. He is the best ruler who can serve well. Be true unto death. The work we want—we do not seek wealth, name or fame.[36]

If you are really my children, you will fear nothing, stop at nothing. You will be like lions. We must rouse India and the whole world. No cowardice. I will take no nay. Do you understand ? Be true unto death !... The secret of this is Guru-Bhakti—faith in the Guru unto death ![37]

Be the servant if you will rule. That is the real secret.[38]

Remember ... we want both men and women. There is no distinction of sex in the soul.... We want thousands of men, and thousands of women, who will spread like wild fire from the Himalayas to Cape Comorin, from the North Pole to the South Pole—all over the world. It is no use indulging in child's play—neither is there time for it. Let those who have come for child's play be off now, while there is time, or they will surely come to grief.[39]

Let each one of us pray day and night for the downtrodden millions in India who are held fast by poverty, priestcraft, and tyranny—pray day and night for them. I care more to preach religion to them than to the high and the rich. I am no metaphysician, no philosopher, nay, no saint. But I am poor, I love the poor.[40]

So long as the millions live in hunger and ignorance, I hold every man a traitor who, having been educated at their expense, pays not the least heed to them ! I call those men who strut about in their finery, having got all their money by grinding the poor, wretches, so long as they do not do anything for those two hundred millions who are now no better than hungry savages ![41]

Each nation has a main current in life ; in India it is religion. Make it strong and the waters on either side must move along with it.[42]

You must always remember that every nation must save itself ; so must every man ; do not look to others for help.[43]

That you may catch my fire, that you may be intensely sincere, that you may die the heroes' death on the field of battle—is the constant prayer of Vivekananda.[44]

I have not found a way that will please all, and I cannot but be what I am, true to my own self. 'Youth and beauty vanish, life and wealth vanish, name and fame vanish, even the mountains crumble into dust. Friendship and love vanish. Truth alone abides.'[45]

Do not figure out big plans at first, but begin slowly, feel your ground, and proceed up and up.[46]

One must work as the dictate comes from within, and then if it is right and good, society is bound to veer round, perhaps centuries after one is dead and gone. We must plunge heart and soul and body into the work. And until we be ready to sacrifice everything else to one *Idea* and to one alone, we *never, never* will see the light.[47]

Was it ever in the history of the world that any great work was done by the rich? It is the heart and the brain that do it ever and ever and not the purse.[48]

Know that every time you feel weak, you not only hurt yourself but also the cause. Infinite faith and strength are the only conditions of success.[49]

Perfect sincerity, holiness, gigantic intellect, and an all-conquering will. Let only a handful of men work with these, and the whole world will be revolutionized.[50]

'Truth alone triumphs, not untruth. Through truth alone lies the way to Devayana (the way to the gods).' Those who think that a little sugar-coating of untruth helps the spread of truth are mistaken and will find in the long run that a single drop of poison poisons the whole mass.... The man who is pure, and who dares, does all things.[51]

In religion lies the vitality of India, and so long as the Hindu race do not forget the great inheritance of their forefathers, there is no power on earth to destroy them.[52]

Cultivate the virtue of obedience, but you must not sacrifice your own faith. No centralization is possible unless there is obedience to superiors. No great work can be done without this centralization of individual forces....

Give up jealousy and conceit. Learn to work unitedly for others. This is the great need of our country.[53]

Infinite patience, infinite purity, and infinite perseverance are the secret of success in a good cause.[54]

'Too many cooks spoil the broth.' In India the one thing we lack is the power of combination, organization, the first secret of which is obedience.[55]

Go on bravely. Do not expect success in a day or a year. Always hold on to the highest. Be steady. Avoid

jealousy and selfishness. Be obedient and eternally faithful to the cause of truth, humanity, and your country, and you will move the world. Remember it is the *person*, the life, which is the secret of power—nothing else.[56]

The more the shades around deepen, the more the ends approach and the more one understands the true meaning of life, that it is a dream ; and we begin to understand the failure of everyone to grasp it, for they only attempted to get meaning out of the meaningless.... 'Everything is evanescent, everything is changeful'—knowing this, the sage gives up both pleasure and pain and becomes a witness of (the universe) this panorama without attaching himself to anything.[57]

Neither numbers nor powers nor wealth nor learning nor eloquence nor anything else will prevail, but *purity, living the life*, in one word, *anubhuti*, realization. Let there be a dozen such lion-souls in each country, lions who have broken their own bonds, who have touched the Infinite, whose whole soul is gone to Brahman, who care neither for wealth nor power nor fame, and these will be *enough* to shake the world.[58]

Let us work without desire for name or fame or rule over the others. Let us be free from the triple bonds of lust, greed of gain, and anger. And the truth is with us ![59]

Are great things ever done smoothly ? Time, patience, and indomitable will must show. I could have told you many things that would have made your heart leap, but I will not. I want iron wills and hearts that do not know how to quake. Hold on.[60]

I hate cowardice ; I will have nothing to do with cowards or political nonsense. I do not believe in any politics. God and truth are the only politics in the world, everything else is trash.[61]

Purity, perseverance, and energy—these three I want.[62]

Purity, patience, and perseverance overcome all obstacles. All great things must of necessity be slow.[63]

Take courage and work on. Patience and steady work—this is the only way.[64]

He who knows how to obey knows how to command. Learn obedience first.... We are all of us self-important—which never produces any work. Great enterprise, boundless courage, tremendous energy, and, above all, perfect obedience—these are the only traits that lead to individual and national regeneration.[65]

Do you think there are *men* in our country, it is a *Golgotha*! There is some chance if you can impart education to the masses. Is there a greater strength than that of knowledge? Can you give them education? Name me the country where rich men ever helped anybody! In all countries it is the middle classes that do all great works. How long will it take to raise the money? Where are the *men*? Are there any in our country?[66]

You must not throw cold water on anybody's project. Give up criticism altogether. Help all as long as you find they are doing all right, and in cases where they seem to be going wrong, show them their mistakes gently. It is criticizing each other that is at the root of all mischief. That is the chief factor in breaking down organizations.[67]

No great work can be achieved by humbug. It is through love, a passion for truth, and tremendous energy, that all undertakings are accomplished. तत् कुरु पौरुषम्—Therefore, manifest your manhood.[68]

We would do nothing ourselves and would scoff at others who try to do something—this is the bane that has brought about our downfall as a nation. Want of sympathy and lack of energy are at the root of all misery, and you must therefore give these two up.[69]

No need of looking behind. FORWARD! We want infinite energy, infinite zeal, infinite courage, and infinite patience then only will great things be achieved.[70]

He who is the servant of all is their true master. He never becomes a leader in whose love there is a consideration of high or low. He whose love knows no end, and never stops to consider high or low, has the whole world lying at his feet.[71]

Religions of the world have become lifeless mockeries.

What the world wants is character. The world is in need of those whose life is one burning love, selfless. That love will make every word tell like thunderbolt.[72]

Be you holy and, above all, sincere and do not for a moment give up your trust in the Lord and you will see the light. Whatever is truth will remain for ever; whatever is not, none can preserve.[73]

What I want is muscles of iron and nerves of steel, inside which dwells a mind of the same material as that of which the thunderbolt is made. Strength, manhood, Kshatra-Virya + Brahma-Teja.[74]

Hold on to your own ideal.... Above all, never attempt to guide or rule others, or, as the Yankees say, 'boss' others. Be the servant of all.[75]

Know that talking ill of others in private is a sin. You must wholly avoid it. Many things may occur to the mind, but it gradually makes a mountain of a molehill if you try to express them. Everything is ended if you forgive and forget.[76]

Another truth I have realized is that altruistic service only is religion, the rest, such as ceremonial observances, are madness—even it is wrong to hanker after one's own salvation. Liberation is only for him who gives up everything for others, whereas others who tax their brains day and night harping on 'my salvation', 'my salvation', wander about with their true well-being ruined, both present and prospective.[77]

Doing good to others is virtue (Dharma); injuring others is sin. Strength and manliness are virtue; weakness and cowardice are sin. Independence is virtue; dependence is sin. Loving others is virtue; hating others is sin. Faith in God and in one's own Self is virtue; doubt is sin. Knowledge of oneness is virtue; seeing diversity is sin.[78]

Persevere on, my brave lads. We have only just begun. Never despond! Never say enough![79]

I want each one of my children to be a hundred times greater than I could ever be. Everyone of you *must be a*

giant—must, that is my word. Obedience, readiness, and love for the cause—if you have these three, nothing can hold you back.[80]

Money and all will come of themselves, we want men, not money. It is man that makes everything, what can money do ?—Men we want, the more you get, the better.[81]

Men are more valuable than all the wealth of the world.[82]

Love never fails, my son ; today or tomorrow or ages after, truth will conquer. Love shall win the victory. Do you love your fellow men ? Where should you go to seek for God—are not all the poor, the miserable, the weak, gods ? Why not worship them first ? Why go to dig a well on the shores of the Ganga ? Believe in the omnipotent power of love. Who cares for these tinsel puffs of name ? I never keep watch of what the newspapers are saying. Have you love ?—You are omnipotent. Are you perfectly unselfish ? If so, you are irresistible. It is character that pays everywhere. It is the Lord who protects His children in the depths of the sea. Your country requires heroes ; be heroes ![83]

Work unto death—I am with you, and when I am gone, my spirit will work with you.[84]

MEMORABLE EVENTS IN THE LIFE OF SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

Bhubaneshwari Devi, Narendranath's mother, was a noble lady. In his later life Swami Vivekananda used to say time and again: 'I am indebted to her for my intellectual development.' She taught Narendra in a unique way. The following event is illustrative:

Once Narendra was punished at school for no fault of his own. The geography teacher asked him a question which Narendra answered correctly. But the teacher thought he was wrong and punished him. But Narendra was undaunted even as a boy. He protested, 'I committed no error, sir; I am sure what I said is right.' This made the teacher furious and he caned Narendra mercilessly.

Narendra returned home, his eyes filled with tears and narrated everything to his mother. But Bhubaneshwari consoled him saying, 'My son, why do you care if you are in the right? Follow the truth always, whatever happens.'

Narendranath found his Master, Sri Ramakrishna, to be an embodiment of the ideal his mother had instilled in him. Sri Ramakrishna used to say: 'Truth is to be cultivated by all means. If a man holds to truth in this Kaliyuga, he will certainly realize God.' And Sri Ramakrishna himself practised what he preached.

This ideal of unwavering loyalty to truth which Swamiji saw in his mother and later in his spiritual master found expression in all his actions. It was therefore only but natural that the world would later hear him proclaim: 'Everything can be sacrificed for truth, but truth cannot be sacrificed for anything.'

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His mother once gave him this advice: 'Be pure, live a

clean life, defend your dignity and be respectful to others. Be gentle and modest, but do not hesitate to be firm when the situation requires it.'

This wise counsel helped to mould Narendra's character. From the time he was a child, he knew how to maintain his self-respect. He never hesitated to show due respect to others ; at the same time he was not prepared to stomach unprovoked insult from anyone. Narendra was amazed one day when one of his father's friends treated him with contempt for no reason at all. He was unfamiliar with such an attitude, for his parents had never considered him to be too young to be treated respectfully. 'How strange', he thought, 'even my father never belittles me this way.' Then he stood erect like a bruised king cobra and firmly said to the gentleman : 'Look, there are many like you who think age and intelligence are synonymous, but that is not so.' The gentleman readily admitted his error.

In the Katha Upanishad we come across Nachiketa, another fearless child who had great self-confidence. Swami Vivekananda always admired Nachiketa who had said : 'I may be the best or at least better than many ; but I'm never the worst.'

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Narendra's father, Vishwanath Datta, was well-known for his charity. Mahendranath Datta, his second son, writes of him : 'The impulse to help the poor was almost like a disease with him.' In his locality he was popularly called 'Vishwanath the benevolent'. He could hardly remain silent when he found someone in distress. He would bear ungrudgingly the educational expenses for the children of his distant relatives and would go out of his way to alleviate the poverty of his neighbours. What is striking is he did not discriminate in matters of charity. He would give financial aid even to drug addicts. Narendranath noticed this and once drew his father's attention to this gross misuse of money. At this

Vishwanath said : 'Life is full of suffering, my son ! When you grow up you will realize all this yourself and will have pity even on addicts or those who take to drink and other vices to get temporary relief from the endless miseries of life.'

Narendranath found a complete expression of this sympathy in the life and teachings of Sri Ramakrishna who transformed his natural compassion into love and reverence for everyone and everything. Sri Ramakrishna taught him that pity is not enough. Man is a living God. Do we ever think of showing pity to God ? No, on the contrary, we feel blessed to be able to serve and worship Him. Therefore 'pity' is not the right expression. The right kind of attitude should be to serve 'jiva' as 'Shiva', to serve humanity as the manifestation of Divinity. None is to be hated, for even the sinner is essentially God. The same 'Narayana' (God) is present in the guise of the thief or the person lacking in culture, as well as in the righteous and refined.

Swami Vivekananda thus learnt from his Master to treat every man, even the fallen one, with respect. He used to say : 'God the wicked', 'God the sinner'. He often said : 'If in this hell of a world one can bring a little joy and peace even for a day into the heart of a single person, that much alone is true ; this I have learnt after suffering all my life.'

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Narendra was a master story-teller whose words were as magnetic as his personality. When he spoke everyone listened in rapt attention forgetting their work. One day while in school, Narendra was talking animatedly to his friends during a class recess. Meanwhile, the teacher had entered the classroom and had begun to teach his subject. But the students were too absorbed in Narendra's story to pay any attention to the lesson. After some time had passed, the teacher heard the whispering and understood what was going on ! Visibly annoyed, he now asked each

student what he had been lecturing on. None could answer. But Narendra was remarkably talented ; his mind could work simultaneously on two planes. While he had engaged one part of his mind in talking, he had kept the other half on the lesson. So when the teacher asked him that question, he answered correctly. Quite nonplussed, the teacher inquired who had been talking so long. Everybody pointed at Narendranath, but the teacher refused to believe them. He then asked all students except Narendra to stand up on the bench. Narendra also joined his friends and stood up. The teacher asked him to sit down. But Narendra replied : 'No sir, I must also stand up because it was I who was talking to them.'

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It was time to deposit fees for the B.A. examination. All the classmates of Narendra except Haridas Chattopadhyaya had deposited the money. Haridas was very poor. He could somehow manage to gather the examination fees but the college authorities would not accept them unless he paid his college dues for the whole year. Thus Haridas's hope of sitting for the examination was dashed to the ground.

Narendranath eventually came to know about the plight of Haridas and was shocked. Suddenly it dawned on him that there was a provision for exemption from college dues in special cases, and that Rajkumarbabu, the old college clerk, could save Haridas in this crisis. There was at least a ray of hope ! So Narendra assured his friend that he would do everything in his capacity to help him.

A few days later when the students were depositing their dues and examination fees, Narendra went to Rajkumarbabu and pleaded, 'Sir, Haridas is incapable of paying his college dues. Will you kindly exempt him ? If you send him up for the examination he will pass with credit ; otherwise he will be undone.'

Rajkumarbabu had an irritable temper. He grimaced and carped at Narendra, 'Your presumptuous recommen-

dation is uncalled for. You better oil your own machine. I won't send him up unless he pays his dues.' Thus rebuffed Narendra became very worried about his friend. He felt hopeless because he knew that he himself could never collect that amount of money, and it had to be paid immediately. Thus he was at a loss, not knowing what to do. At this point a plan occurred to him.

He knew that Rajkumarbabu was an opium-addict and that every evening he visited a particular den adjacent to Hedua to indulge in this habit. Narendra did not return home after college hours that day but eagerly waited for sundown. As darkness enveloped the city, Narendranath moved close to the den and kept watching those going towards it. After some time Narendranath noticed that old Rajkumar was stealthily inching towards the opium shops. Realizing that the fish was now in his net, Narendranath hurriedly appeared before Rajkumarbabu, who was of course embarrassed. Narendranath realized that this was the opportune moment. He once again pleaded for Haridas and threatened that he would let the cat out of the bag if Rajkumarbabu failed to comply with his request.

Rajkumarbabu smelt danger, so he said to Narendra in a low voice, 'Why do you get angry with me, dear ? What you want will be done. Can I ever ignore your request ?' Narendranath understood his job was over and his mission was successful, so he returned home as the old man slipped into the narcotic den.

Before day-break the following day, Narendranath went to Haridas's house and said to him, 'Come, be of good cheer, our work is done. You will not have to pay the college dues.' Then Narendra described vividly what had happened the previous evening and both of them burst into laughter.

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The following incident took place during Swamiji's

wandering days when he was staying at Varanasi. One day when he was returning from visiting the Durga temple, a troop of monkeys chased after him. To save himself Swamiji at first started running, but the monkeys ran still faster and grew increasingly aggressive. At this time an old monk who happened to witness the scene called out to him : 'Stop running. Face the brutes !' Swamiji heard his call and turned to 'face the brutes.' Then the monkeys stopped harassing him.

Swamiji drew a great lesson from this apparently simple incident. He learnt that one should not run away when faced with danger or difficulty ; instead, one must face it boldly. In his later life, Swamiji referred to this incident while addressing a gathering in New York. He said : 'That is a lesson for all life—face the terrible, face it boldly. Like the monkeys, the hardships of life fall back when we cease to flee before them. If we are ever to gain freedom, it must be by conquering nature, never by running away. Cowards never win victories. We have to face fear and troubles and ignorance if we expect them to flee before us.'

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Once someone told Swamiji that the monk should have no particular attachment to his country. Instead, he should view all countries as his own. At this, Swamiji replied : 'He who fails to love and support his mother how can he provide sustenance for another's mother ?' What Swamiji meant was that even the sannyasins should love their motherland. How can he who cannot love his own country, embrace the world ? Patriotism first, then universalism.

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Swamiji was having a long trek in the Himalayas when he found an old man extremely exhausted standing hopelessly at the foot of an upward slope. The man said to

Swamiji in utter frustration, 'Oh, Sir, how to cross it ; I cannot walk any more ; my chest will break.'

Swamiji listened to the old man patiently and then said, 'Look down at your feet. The road that is under your feet is the road that you have passed over and is the same road that you see before you ; it will soon be under your feet.' These words emboldened the old man to resume his onward trek.

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It was August, 1888. Swamiji was on his way to Vrindavan from Agra. As he reached the outskirts of the town he saw a man contentedly smoking tobacco by the wayside. Swamiji was tired as he had walked a long way. He felt an urge to smoke and take some rest. So he approached the man and asked him if he could smoke his hookah. The very proposal made the man shudder. He said to Swamiji, 'I am sorry, sir ! I cannot allow you to smoke this pipe which I have used. You are a monk while I am a Bhangi, an ignoble sweeper !'

Swamiji said nothing and resumed his walk. But having gone some distance, it struck him in a flash : What ! am I not a sannyasin who has renounced everything including the idea of caste, family prestige and so forth ? What a shame that I would not smoke his pipe only because he is a Bhangi ! The thought made him so restless that he at once came back to the man and made him prepare a chillum of tobacco, much against his wish. Then Swamiji joyfully smoked the pipe.

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On April 13, 1890, Swamiji, who was then staying at Varanasi, received the sad news that Balaram Bose, his brother disciple, had passed away. He was so shocked that he could not restrain his tears. Pramadadas Mitra, a renowned scholar of Varanasi, noticed this and said : 'Swamiji, you are a monk. You should not lament like this.'

Pramadababu's remark hurt Swamiji. He said, 'What do you mean, Pramadababu ? It is true I am a monk. But should a monk necessarily be heartless ?' Then he continued : 'You see, a genuine monk is much more tender-hearted than ordinary souls. After all, we are human beings. And, on top of it all, Balarambabu was my brother disciple. I don't like the kind of asceticism which makes one unfeeling and pitiless !'

Swamiji often used to tell his disciples that he who does not try to do good to others can hardly be called a sannyasin. He repeatedly said that a sannyasin is born to live for others, to comfort the afflicted—be she a mother who has lost her son or a sad widow. He is there to redress the worldly suffering of mortals as well as to take care of their spiritual need by arousing their latent spirituality.

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Swamiji held Pavhari Baba in high esteem. He knew the yogi personally. While in Ghazipur, Swamiji heard that once a thief entered into Baba's hut to rob him of his few belongings. As the thief was about to leave the place with the stolen goods, the yogi woke up. This frightened the thief and he threw down everything and started running away. Pavhari Baba promptly picked up the things and followed the thief. Finally, after a hot chase, he caught the thief and begged him to accept the goods. 'All these are yours, Narayana', Baba told the thief, who stared at him in disbelief.

Years later during his wanderings in the Himalayas Swamiji one day noticed a sadhu of luminous appearance. After some conversation Swamiji became convinced that the sadhu was of a high order. But he was astonished when the latter said, 'I was that thief who attempted to steal from the saint !' The monk continued his confession : 'When Pavhari Baba handed me everything that belonged to him with a smile and addressed me as 'Narayana', I realized what a crime I had committed and how mean I

was ! From that moment I gave up my evil pursuit of material wealth and engaged myself in search for spiritual wealth.' His story deeply impressed Swamiji who later used to say : Sinners are potential saints.

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An interesting incident took place when Swami Vivekananda was living the life of a wandering monk. It was most probably in the second week of November, 1890 that Swamiji came to Meerut where by chance he met some of his brother monks who were also on pilgrimage. All of them were naturally very pleased to see one another after such a long time. They lived together and transformed the place into a second Baranagore Math.

It is well-known that Swamiji was a great lover of books. In Meerut, he spent much time in reading. At his bidding Swami Akhandananda would go to a local library every day and bring a big volume of Sir John Lubbock's works and return it the following day.

The librarian thought that Swamiji was not reading the books, that he was only trying to impress everyone. One day the librarian openly expressed his doubt to Swami Akhandananda when the latter came to collect another volume of Lubbock. Akhandananda reported this to Swamiji. On hearing this Swamiji himself one day called on the librarian and said to him humbly, 'Sir, I have gone through the books attentively, and if you have any doubt about it, you may ask any question you like from the books.' The librarian then asked a number of questions and Swamiji correctly answered them. The librarian was astonished. Never before had he seen such a person as Swamiji !

The Raja of Khetri was equally amazed by Swamiji's mode of reading. Swamiji would simply turn over the pages of a book quite hurriedly from beginning to the end, and that was all—the book had been read ! When the Raja asked how that was possible, Swamiji explained that when a child first learns to read he fixes his attention on a

particular letter of the alphabet, pronounces it twice or thrice, and then moves on to the next letter to utter the whole word. As he masters the art of reading a little, he keeps his attention on each word. After much practice he can read a sentence at a glance. Likewise, if one goes on increasing his power of concentration, one can read a page in the twinkling of an eye. Swamiji said that was exactly what he did and added that three things were necessary—continence, practice, and concentration. Anybody could achieve this power if he scrupulously adhered to these three things.

Once he astonished Haripada Mitra, the Sub-divisional Forest Officer of Belgaum, by reciting from memory a large portion of Dickens's *Pickwick Papers*. Haripadababu was more wonderstruck when Swamiji told him that he had read the book only twice. He told Mitra that concentration and continence sharpen the mind.

Swamiji was once unwell and staying at Belur Math. One day his disciple Sharatchandra Chakravarti came to see him in his room and found there a new set of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. Sharatchandra looked at those large glossy volumes and remarked, 'It is indeed very difficult to read so many volumes in one lifetime.' Swamiji did not agree. 'What do you mean?' he said, 'Ask me anything you like from the ten volumes I have just finished.'

The disciple asked Swamiji a number of questions from each volume and, to his wonder, Swamiji passed the test. Not only that, in many cases, Swamiji quoted at length the very words of the books. At last, to instil self-confidence in his disciple, Swamiji said, 'Look my child, if you can observe strict continence, you can master everything you wish and can easily acquire this kind of memory.' Swamiji said the same thing to the German philosopher Paul Deusen who was astonished by his prodigious memory.

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It was 1891. Swamiji was staying at Mount Abu as a guest of a Muslim lawyer. One day Jagmohanlal, the Private Secretary of the Raja of Khetri, came to the lawyer's bungalow and was quite surprised to see Swamiji, a Hindu sannyasin, there. Unable to conceal his wonder, Jagmohanlal said to Swamiji : 'Well, Swamiji, you are a Hindu monk. How is it that you are living with a Muslim ?'

Swamiji could never stand the slightest hint of caste and religious discrimination or parochialism of any sort, so he replied in a stern voice : 'Sir, what do you mean ? I am a sannyasin. I am above all your social conventions. I can dine even with sweepers, the so-called outcastes. I am not afraid of God, for He sanctions it ; I am not afraid of scriptures, for they allow it ; but I am afraid of you people and your society. You know nothing of God and the scriptures. I see Brahman everywhere, manifested even in the meanest creature. For me, there is nothing high or low. Shiva, Shiva !' Every word of Swamiji rained fire while Munshi Jagmohanlal stood mesmerised before his towering personality.

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One evening the Raja of Khetri wished to hear songs sung by a professional dancing-girl as was the custom in those days. At that time Swamiji was staying as Ajit Singhji's guest at the Khetri palace. The Raja invited Swamiji to join him but Swamiji refused and sent a message that as a sannyasin it was against his principles to attend such a party.

The singer was deeply grieved when she heard this, and started to sing, as it were in reply, a song of Surdas, the Vaishnava saint. Through the quiet evening air, the girl's sweet, plaintive voice reached the sensitive ears of Swamiji. The message of the song was : 'O Lord, look not upon my evil qualities. Thy name, O Lord, is Same-sighted. One piece of iron is in the image in the temple, and another in the butcher's hand, but when they touch

the philosopher's stone, both alike turn into gold. So, Lord, look not upon my evil qualities.'

The whole song expressing the truth that God dwells in everyone and everything touched Swamiji deeply. He soon reproached himself, muttering 'What sort of a Sannyasin are you that you still distinguish a woman from yourself ?' The song taught him a great lesson. Swamiji realized he could not reject anyone, for in all lies the same Self. He then rushed to the music room and listened to the song. It is said that Swamiji addressed the woman as 'Mother' and begged her pardon for his discourteous behaviour.

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A sannyasin, in the strictest sense of the term, is always a free soul. Like a river, he is always on the move. Sometimes he spends the night at a burning ghat, sometimes he sleeps in the palace of a king, sometimes he rests at a railway station but he is always happy. Such a sannyasin was Swamiji whom we now find living at a railway station in Rajasthan. People kept coming to him all day long. They had many questions, mostly religious, and Swamiji was tireless in answering them. Three days and three nights passed in this manner. Swamiji was so engrossed in talking about spiritual matters that he did not even stop to eat. The people who flocked to him also did not think of asking him if he had any food to eat !

On the third night of his stay there, when the visitors had all left, a poor man came forward and said to him lovingly, 'Swamiji, I have noticed that for three days you have been talking and talking. You have not taken even a drop of water ! This has pained me very much.'

Swamiji felt that God had appeared before him in the form of this poor man. He looked at him and said, 'Will you please give me something to eat ?' The man was a cobbler by profession, so he said with some hesitation, 'Swamiji, my heart yearns to give you some bread, but how can I ? I have touched it. If you permit, I will bring

you some coarse flour and dal and you can prepare them as you please !'

Swamiji said, 'No, my child ; give me the bread you have baked. I shall be happy to eat it.' The poor man was frightened at first. He feared the king might punish him if he came to know that he, a low caste person, had prepared food for a sannyasin. But the eagerness to serve a monk overpowered his fear. He hurriedly went back home and soon returned with bread freshly baked for Swamiji. The kindness and unselfish love of this penurious man brought tears to Swamiji's eyes. How many persons like this live in the huts of our country unnoticed, he thought. They are materially poor and of so-called humble origin, yet they are so noble and large-hearted.

In the meantime, some gentlemen found that Swamiji was eating food offered by a shoemaker and were very annoyed. They came to Swamiji and told him that it was improper for him to accept food from a man of low birth. Swamiji patiently heard them and then said, 'You people made me talk without respite for the past three days, but you did not even care to inquire if I had taken any food and rest. You claim you are gentlemen and boast of your high caste ; what is more shameful, you condemn this man for being of a low caste. Can you overlook the humanity he has just shown and despise him without feeling ashamed ?'

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Spiritually advanced souls sometimes suffer from what is called divine discontent. Swamiji was no exception. Once when leading the life of wandering monk, he despaired of attaining the highest goal—God realization—for which he had renounced the world. 'This life is of no use to me,' he said to himself and made up his mind to meditate without food and thus let his body drop like a dry leaf.

With this aim in mind, he entered a trackless forest and walked the whole day without any food. After

sundown he felt too tired to go further and lay down under a tree. After a little while he saw a tiger stealthily advancing towards him. He lay still and thought : 'Here is an opportunity for me to serve at least one hungry beast by being its prey. I do not think I will ever be able to do any other good to the world.' Then he calmly waited for the tiger to pounce on him. The tiger came very close to Swamiji, but for some unknown reason, turned around and disappeared into the darkness of the forest. Swamiji could not believe his eyes ! He kept thinking that the tiger might return. He spent the whole night under the tree waiting, but the tiger did not come back.

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The Maharaja of Mysore, Chamarajendra Wadiyar, like some other rulers of the princely states, felt attracted to the luminous personality and exceptional talents of Swamiji, then a wandering monk, and in a short time intimacy developed between the two. One day the Maharaja asked, 'Swamiji, what do you think of my courtiers ?' The courtiers were all present there, but Swamiji was in the habit of calling a spade a spade. So he said without any hesitation : 'Courtiers are courtiers everywhere !'

The Maharaja understood what Swamiji meant. He was intelligent enough to realize that what Swamiji said was true. Yet, as if to pretend that he did not wholly agree with Swamiji and thereby defend the honour of his courtiers, he said in mild protest, 'No, no, Swamiji, my Dewan at least is not such. He is intelligent and trustworthy.' 'But, your Highness,' replied Swamiji, 'a Dewan is one who robs the Maharaja and pays the political agent of the British Government.'

The Maharaja, finding that Swamiji was going too far, changed the course of discussion and after some time took Swamiji to his inner chamber and said, 'My dear Swami, too much frankness is not always safe. If you continue to speak as you did in the presence of my courtiers, I am

afraid you will be poisoned by someone.' Swamiji burst out, 'What ! do you think an honest sannyasi is afraid of speaking the truth, even though it costs him his very life ? Suppose, your Highness, your son should ask me tomorrow, "Swamiji, what do you think of my father ?" am I to attribute to you all sorts of virtues which I am quite aware that you do not possess ? Shall I speak falsely ? Never !'

Despite his outspokenness, Swamiji never criticized anybody behind his back. If he found something wrong with somebody he would criticize him only to his face. In his absence, he would praise his virtues, brushing aside his negative aspects.

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Swami Turiyananda (Hari Maharaj) tells of an incident that took place at the Abu Road station when he, with Swami Brahmananda, came to see Swamiji before he left for Bombay. Swamiji said to him on that occasion, 'Haribhai, I am still unable to understand anything of your so-called religion.' He could not finish all that he wanted to say as he was overwhelmed with an intense emotion that shook his frame and brought a look of profound sadness to his face. But he soon composed himself, and placing his hand on his chest, added, 'But my heart has expanded beyond measure and I have learnt to feel the sufferings of others ! Believe me, I literally writhe with pain when anybody suffers !'

Swamiji was again overwhelmed and tears streamed down his cheeks. Swami Turiyananda was stunned. 'Didn't Buddha feel the same way and utter these very words of love ?' he thought. He could clearly perceive that the endless misery of millions of people was creating a tempest in Swamiji. His heart was, as it were, a vast cauldron in which an ointment to redress all the sufferings of mankind was being prepared.

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Swamiji had a deep sense of self-respect and also wanted all Indians to be equally conscious of their self-respect. The following incident prior to his journey to the West will illustrate this point.

Swamiji and Jagmohanlal were sitting inside a railway coach at the Abu Road station, waiting for the train to leave for Bombay. A Bengali admirer of Swamiji who came to see them off was also in the compartment. In the mean time, a European ticket-collector came and harshly ordered the gentleman out of the train. The gentleman was also a railway employee. He tried to convince the ticket-collector that he had done nothing unlawful. But the ticket-collector would not listen to him. As a result there was a heated argument when Swamiji himself intervened. But the European, taking him to be an ordinary monk, said in an insolent manner, *'Tum kahe bat karte ho ?'*—'Why do you interfere ?'

The Hindi word 'tum' is used to address intimate friends or inferiors while the word 'ap' denotes either equals or superiors. The disparaging 'tum' angered Swamiji. He said, 'What do you mean by *Tum* ? Can you not behave properly ? You are attending to first and second-class passengers, and you do not know manners ! Why do you not say *Ap* ?' Realizing his mistake, the ticket-collector said, 'I am sorry. I don't know the language well. I only wanted this man...'. Swamiji interrupted him : 'Just now you said you did not know Hindi well. Now I see that you do not even know your own language well. This "man" of whom you speak is a "gentleman".' Swamiji then told the European that he would report his disrespectful actions to the authorities. Quite frightened, the ticket-collector hurriedly left the compartment.

No sooner had the ticket-collector left than Swamiji turned to Jagmohanlal and said : You see, what we need in our dealings with the Europeans is self-respect. We should always remain as conscious of our rank and station

as others do. Unfortunately we fail to do so and this failure prompts others to disparage us. We must defend our self-esteem by all means, otherwise we will be slighted and insulted. Mind you, cowardice is the breeding ground of all corruption, of all evils. The Hindus are no less civilized than anybody else on earth, but they always underestimate themselves. That is why every Tom, Dick and Harry dare to humiliate us, and we stomach the insult silently.

Thus Swamiji taught Indians how to love and respect their country. He was fully confident that the world needed Indian spiritual treasures much more than it needed Western materialism. And this conviction never allowed him to be dazzled by the sparkling affluence of Western civilization, nor did it let him suffer for a moment from any inferiority complex. It was again out of that unshakable conviction that he proclaimed the glory of Indian civilization and culture. There can be no doubt that his courage and the strength of his conviction inspired thousands of people in the West to love India and its civilization. Insight into how Swamiji was viewed at the historic Parliament of Religions can be had from the words of Dr Annie Besant.

Dr Besant wrote : 'A striking figure, clad in yellow and orange, shining like the sun of India in the midst of the heavy atmosphere of Chicago, a lion head, piercing eyes, mobile lips, movements swift and abrupt—such was my first impression of Swami Vivekananda, as I met him in one of the rooms set apart for the use of the delegates to the Parliament of Religions. Monk, they called him, not unwarrantably, warrior-monk was he, and the first impression was of the warrior rather than of the monk, for he was off the platform, and his figure was instinct with pride of country, pride of race—the representative of the oldest of living religions.... India was not to be shamed before the hurrying arrogant West by this her envoy and her son. He brought her message, he spoke in her name,

and the herald remembered the dignity of the royal land whence he came. Purposeful, virile, strong, he stood out, a man among men, able to hold his own.'

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Swamiji's first lecture at the Parliament of Religions made him so famous that the most distinguished people of Chicago invited him to their homes. Everybody wanted to be his host.

After the first day's session of the Parliament, Swamiji was taken to the mansion of a millionaire and given a royal reception. The host did everything possible to make Swamiji feel comfortable, but Swamiji neither hankered after name and fame nor did he want physical comfort. So even amidst this pomp and grandeur and the spontaneous applause from the American people, Swamiji felt uncomfortable. He could not forget how much his countrymen were suffering. His heart continued to bleed for India and he could not sleep on the luxurious bed. He lay on the floor and wept like a child the whole night. He prayed : 'O Mother, who cares for fame when my country is bogged down in deep poverty ! We Indians are so miserably poor that millions of us die for want of a handful of rice, while here people spend money lavishly only for personal comforts ! Who will raise the Indians and give them food ? O Mother, tell me how I can serve them !' Such was Swamiji's burning love for India !

A similar incident took place at Belur Math after Swamiji's return from the West. Swami Vijnanananda, a brother disciple of Swamiji, was then staying at the Math. Swamiji loved him and affectionately called him 'Pesan' for his name was Hariprasanna before joining the Order.

Swami Vijnanananda occupied the room next to Swamiji's. One night his sleep was broken by the sound of sobbing and he rushed to Swamiji's room. There he found Swamiji bitterly crying. Swamiji did not notice that his brother disciple had come into his room.

'Are you not feeling well Swamiji ?', asked

Vijnanananda. Swamiji was startled, 'Oh, Pesan', he said, 'I presumed you were asleep. No, my dear, I am not sick. But I cannot sleep as long as my country suffers. I was crying and praying to Sri Ramakrishna that we would soon see better days.'

Swamiji was an embodiment of love for India and her people. He would inspire everybody who came in contact with him to love India. Sister Christine writes : 'Our love for India came to birth, I think, when we first heard him say the word, "India", in that marvellous voice of his. It seems incredible that so much could have been put into one small word of five letters. There was love, passion, pride, longing, adoration, tragedy, chivalry, and again love. Whole volumes could not have produced such a feeling in others. It had the magic power of creating love in those who heard it. Ever after, India became the land of heart's desire. Everything concerning her became of interest—became living—her people, her history, architecture, her manners and customs, her rivers, mountains, plains, her culture, her great spiritual concepts, her scriptures.'

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Swamiji's lectures were very popular in London. One evening he was talking about *Raja-Yoga* and all those present were listening with rapt attention. But good things are not always appreciated by everybody. An Anglo-Indian started making silly criticisms of Swamiji who at first ignored him and went on speaking inspiringly on the subject. The audience became very much annoyed with the person at first, but seeing that Swamiji was unmoved, they kept quiet.

The Anglo-Indian gentleman became increasingly boisterous and flouted all norms of decency. When Swamiji paid tribute to Buddha, he criticized Buddha, when Swamiji praised the sannyasins, he called them thieves and impostors ; and finally when he learned that

Swamiji was a Bengali, he began to vilify the people of Bengal and to eulogise the British.

Being interrupted time and again, Swamiji now turned towards the man and began to cite from the pages of history many instances of British criminal behaviour. Battered thus by the fearless Indian monk right in the heart of Britain, the Anglo-Indian gentleman broke into tears. Swamiji gracefully returned to his subject and concluded his speech as if nothing had happened.

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In one of his discourses at a western American town, Swamiji said that one who has attained absolute truth or knowledge remains the same under all circumstances ; he is always calm and unruffled by things external. A few churlish cowboys heard this lecture and decided to test him. When Swamiji went to their village to deliver a lecture they asked him to stand on a reversed tub and address the gathering.

Swamiji did as requested and then became absorbed in his subject. The cowboys meanwhile started firing from close range, the bullets whizzing past Swamiji's ears. This did not perturb Swamiji in the least. He continued his speech with as much composure as he started it. When he had finished, the cowboys surrounded him, shook hands with him and declared : 'Yes Swami, you are absolutely genuine. You are what you preach !'

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Swamiji became well-known in America. Once he was given a rousing reception at a railway station as he got down from the train. A Negro porter went forward to shake hands with him saying : 'Congratulations ! I am extremely delighted that a man of my race has attained such great honour ! The entire Negro community in this country feels proud of you !' Swamiji eagerly shook hands with the porter and said warmly, 'Thank you ! Thank you, brother !' He refused to deny he was a Negro.

Swamiji was insulted, humiliated and refused entry into many hotels in the South on suspicion that he was a Negro. But he never protested or explained that he was an Indian. A Western disciple once asked him why he did not tell them he was from India in such situations. 'What !', Swamiji replied, 'Rise at the expense of another ! I did not come to earth for that !'

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Madame Emma Calve was a celebrated opera singer in France. She also enjoyed great popularity in the United States. But despite her professional success, her personal life was miserable, she was very obstinate and quick-tempered and had strong likes and dislikes. Naturally she had no peace of mind. To add to her suffering, in March 1894 she lost her only daughter in an accident in Chicago. After this tragedy she nearly lost her mental balance. At this moment, a friend of hers wanted to take her to Swamiji, but Madame Calve refused, for she thought there was only one way left for her to get permanent peace and that was to commit suicide. She tried four times to do this but failed. At last she decided to go to Swamiji, having seen how he had helped some of her friends.

She went to the place where he was staying and was admitted to the study. When she was called in, she found Swamiji 'seated in a noble attitude of meditation, his robe of saffron-yellow falling in straight lines to the floor, his head, swathed in a turban, bent forward, his eyes on the ground.'

Swamiji did not look up, but in a gentle, affectionate voice said, 'My child, what a troubled atmosphere you have about you ! Be calm ! It is essential !' In her memoirs Madame Calve wrote : 'Then in a quiet voice, untroubled and aloof, this man, who did not even know my name, talked to me of my secret problems and anxieties. He spoke of things that I thought were unknown even to my nearest friends.' When it was time for her to leave, Swamiji showered blessings on her and said : 'You must

forget. Become gay and happy again. Build up your health. Do not dwell in silence upon your sorrows.' In a moment Madame Calve felt she had no more sorrows, no more anxieties. In her words, 'He seemed to have emptied my brain of all its feverish complexities and placed there instead his clear and calming thoughts.'

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Madame Calve gave her friend, Madame Paul Verdier, the following account of Swamiji's encounter with the American millionaire John D. Rockefeller.

According to Madame Verdier's notes, Mr Rockefeller had heard from his friends about Swamiji. They wanted him to meet the extraordinary Indian monk, but on one pretext or another, he refused. He was very strong-willed and it was difficult for anyone to change his decision. But one day, on an impulse, Rockefeller went to the house of a friend in Chicago where Swamiji was staying. Brushing aside the butler who opened the door, he demanded to see the Hindu monk.

The butler ushered him into the living room, and not waiting to be announced, Rockefeller entered Swamiji's adjoining study. He was greatly surprised to see Swamiji seated at his writing table not even lifting his eyes to see who had entered. After a while, as with Calve, Swamiji told Rockefeller much about his past that was not known to anyone but himself, and made him understand that the money he had already accumulated was not his, that he was only a channel and that his duty was to do good to the world—that God had given him his wealth in order that he might have an opportunity to help people. Rockefeller was annoyed that anyone dared to talk to him that way. He left the room in irritation, not even saying goodbye. But about a week later, again without being announced, he entered Swamiji's study and finding him the same as before, threw on his desk a paper which told of his plans to donate an enormous sum of money toward the financing of a public institution.

'Well, there you are,' he said, 'you must be satisfied now, and you can thank me for it!' Swamiji didn't even lift his eyes, didn't move. Then taking the paper, he quietly read it and said, 'It is for you to thank me.'

This was Rockefeller's first large donation to the cause of public welfare. Later he became widely known for his philanthropy.

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It was again in Chicago that Swamiji met Robert Ingersoll, the famous orator and agnostic. They were poles apart. While Swamiji was spirituality in flesh and blood having unshakable faith in transcendental truth and was only against religious fanaticism and pretensions, Ingersoll was opposed to all religious beliefs and had no faith in transcendental truth. Nevertheless, they met on more than one occasion and discussed religious and philosophical matters.

One day Ingersoll said to Swamiji, 'I believe in making the most out of this world, in squeezing the orange dry, because this world is all we are sure of.'

Swamiji replied : 'I know a better way to squeeze the orange of this world than you do ; and I get more out of it. I know I cannot die, so I am not in a hurry. I know that there is no fear, so I enjoy the squeezing. I have no duty, no bondage of wife and children and property ; and so I can love all men and women. Everyone is God to me. Think of the joy of loving man as God ! Squeeze your orange this way and get ten thousand-fold more out of it. Get every single drop !'

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Before he left London, one of his British friends put this question to him : 'Swami, how do you like now your motherland after four years' experience of the luxurious, glorious, powerful West ?' Swamiji said : 'India I loved before I came away. Now the very dust of India has

become holy to me, the very air is now to me holy ; it is now the holy land, the place of pilgrimage, the Tirtha !'

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One day in Calcutta, Swamiji told Priyanath Sinha, his disciple, that a man becomes bold and courageous when he truly loves his own religion, and that such a steadfast love could bring about the unity that was lacking among Indians. In this connection, Swamiji narrated an incident that took place on board the ship that was carrying him to India.

During the voyage two Christian missionaries had come to him and insisted on discussing the merits and demerits of Hinduism and Christianity. As the missionaries began to lose ground in the debate, they grew increasingly belligerent and started slandering the Hindus and their religion. Swamiji stood it as long as he could ; then walking close to them seized one of the missionaries by the collar and said jokingly yet firmly, 'If you abuse my religion again, I will throw you overboard !' The frightened missionary 'shook in his boots' and said under his breath, 'Let me go, sir ! I will never do it again.' After that, Swamiji told Priyanath, the missionary treated him respectfully whenever they met.

Having told this story, Swamiji turned to his disciple and asked him what would he do if someone insulted his mother. Priyanath replied : 'Why, I would catch him by the neck and give him a good dressing down !' Pleased with the reply, Swamiji said, 'Well Sinha, if you had the same unflinching loyalty to your religion, the true Mother of our country, you could not bear to see the conversion of your Hindu brethren to Christianity. You see this occurring everyday, yet you are quite indifferent. Where is your faith ! Where is your patriotism ! Everyday Christian missionaries abuse Hinduism to your face, and yet how many are there amongst you who will stand up in its defence ?'

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During the sea-voyage just referred to, Swamiji had with him a number of English disciples. When their ship cast anchor at Aden, Swamiji disembarked and went to see some places of local interest, three miles from the port. The disciples followed him.

As the party was moving about, Swamiji suddenly spotted an Indian betel-leaf seller. He left his companions and hurried to where the man was seated. It was a great joy for him to talk to an Indian after such a long time.

Meanwhile, his disciples were looking for him. They did not know where he had gone. After some time they found him sitting comfortably beside the betel-leaf seller. It was a wonderful sight ! They smiled when they heard him say to the simple-looking 'pan-wallah', 'Brother, do give me your pipe.' The 'pan-wallah' gave his hookah to Swamiji who began to smoke it with great satisfaction. Swamiji's boyish simplicity, love for his fellow countryman and his capacity to get joy out of small things greatly impressed Captain Sevier and the others.

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Swamiji was not keeping well since his return from the West. His health was deteriorating day by day, so on the advice of his brother monks, disciples and well-wishers, he went to Darjeeling for a change.

One day, when he was out for a morning walk, he was pained to see a Bhutia woman trudging along with a heavy load on her back. Those who were with Swamiji noticed Swamiji's feeling for her, sharing every bit of her suffering as it were ! Suddenly the woman stumbled and fell down with all her burden. She sustained serious injuries to her ribs. But Swamiji also felt excruciating pain in his ribs at the same time. He stood still for some time, then said, 'I cannot move. I am suffering from terrible pain !' The companions asked, 'Where do you feel the pain, Swamiji ?' Pointing to his ribs, Swamiji said : 'Right here ! Did you not see how badly that woman was injured a few moments ago ?'

Though rare, such things happen in the lives of those who are very sensitive and who have great sympathy for others. We find such incidents also in the life of Sri Ramakrishna. One day, Sri Ramakrishna cried out in pain when a boatman on the Ganga was struck by another boatman.

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There was no change in the ways and behaviour of Swamiji towards his friends even when he became famous and was worshipped by thousands of devotees at home and abroad. He was the same 'Naren' to them throughout.

When in Lahore, Swamiji met his boyhood friend, Motilal Bose by chance. Motilal, who owned the Great Indian Circus, was there in connection with a show of his troupe. Having met his friend after a long time Swamiji plunged into conversation with him. But Motilal felt uneasy. He said, 'Brother, how should I address you, as "Naren" or "Swamiji"?'

Swamiji burst out laughing and said : 'Are you crazy ? My dear Moti, nothing has changed. You are to me the same "Moti" and I am "Naren" ' Swamiji uttered these words with so much love and tenderness that Motilal was deeply moved and forgot all his diffidence.

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Another touching incident occurred at Alwar where following his return from America, Swamiji had gone to meet his intimate friends and disciples. Many admirers, friends and notable personalities assembled at the Alwar railway station to receive him, but Swamiji's attention fell on one person, apparently a man of no significance standing humbly at the edge of the crowd. The man was shabbily dressed but he was beaming with joy seeing his Swamiji after such a long time. He too wanted to be in Swamiji's company, but did not have the courage to force his way through the crowd. Swamiji noticed him and called out, 'Ramasnehi ! Ramasnehi !' The crowd made

way for the simple-looking man who then came forward to greet Swamiji. Swamiji welcomed him and affectionately chatted with him.

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Many rich people who were devoted to Swamiji invited him to dinner during his brief stay at Alwar, but Swamiji first accepted the invitation of a poor old woman who during his wandering days had offered him food when he had nothing to eat. Swamiji did not forget her kindness. On reaching Alwar, Swamiji had sent a message to her saying that he wished to be treated to some of the thick chapatis he was offered years before and which he relished very much.

The old woman was beside herself with joy. She prepared the chapatis with great care and waited eagerly for Swamiji and his disciples. When they came, she lovingly served them the simple meal. Swamiji enjoyed the food and told his disciples, 'See how devout, how motherly, this old woman is ! And how pure and simple the food is !' Before parting Swamiji silently thrust a hundred rupee note into the hands of the master of the house to be given to the old woman.

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In 1890, during Swamiji's wanderings in the Himalayas, Swami Akhandananda was with him. One day, when they were about two miles from Almora, Swamiji almost collapsed because of hunger and exhaustion. A Muslim fakir who lived near by, having found the unknown monk in such a condition, quickly brought a cucumber to him. But Swamiji was too weak to lift it to his mouth, so the fakir fed him. After this Swamiji felt a little better.

When Swamiji returned to Almora seven years later, a meeting was arranged by the local people to welcome him. As the function was going on, Swamiji's attention suddenly fell on a man in the crowd. The man was none

else but the fakir who had come to his rescue years before. Swamiji recognized him and bringing him before the audience, announced that the fakir had once saved his life. He later gave him some money. The fakir, however, did not remember Swamiji.

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One winter Swamiji went to Deoghar as a guest of Priyanath Mukherjee accompanied by Swami Niranjanananda. One day, while taking a walk with his brother disciple, Swamiji saw a man lying helpless by the side of the road writhing in pain. Swamiji moved closer to the man and found he was suffering from acute dysentery. He felt the man needed immediate medical treatment, but first, he must be moved from the roadside. But where to take him ? He thought of Priyanath's house. However, Swamiji himself was only a guest, how could he take this unknown man there ? Priyanathbabu might be offended. He thus hesitated a moment and then made up his mind to serve the helpless man at all costs. So with the help of Swami Niranjanananda, he brought the man to Priyanathbabu's house and placed him on a bed, cleaned him thoroughly, clothed him and began to apply hot fomentations. As a result, the man soon recovered. Instead of being vexed, Priyanathbabu was filled with admiration for this wonderful expression of Swamiji's love.

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A preacher of the Cow Protection Society once approached Swamiji for financial help. He told Swamiji that the Society had set up cow infirmaries in different parts of the country to protect mother-cows from the hands of the butcher. Swamiji first gave him a patient hearing, then he said, 'A terrible famine has now broken out in Central India. The Indian Government has published a death roll of nine lakhs of people. Has your Society done anything to help them ?' The preacher answered in the negative and said that their organization

was exclusively for the protection of mother-cows and that they did not see any reason why they should help the famine-stricken people, for it was their karma that had invited the calamity.

This atrocious explanation angered Swamiji, but he controlled his rage and said in a quiet yet firm voice : 'I have not the least sympathy for those organizations which do not feel for man, which do not offer a handful of rice to save the lives of their starving brothers while distributing piles of food to birds and beasts in the name of charity and love. I believe they are of no use to society. If one goes strictly by the theory of karma, then all efforts, all struggles for anything on earth, including your drive to save the cows, become utterly meaningless. It can be well argued then that the mother-cows fall into the hands of butchers and die according to their own karma and we need not do anything about this.'

The preacher did not know what to say, but to bolster his argument, he replied : 'Yes, Swami, what you say is true ; but the scriptures say that the cow is our mother.' Swamiji said sarcastically, 'No doubt you are right ; who else could give birth to such accomplished children !'

The preacher failed to understand what Swamiji meant and once again begged for funds for the Cow Protection Society. When he had finished, Swamiji said : 'I am a sannyasin, a penniless fakir. How can I give you monetary help ? But if some day I have money I shall first spend it in the service of man. Man is to be served and saved first. He must be given food, education and spirituality. If any money is still left after attending to all these human needs, perhaps something could be given to your Society.'

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The famous editor of 'Hitavadi', Pandit Sakharam Ganesh Deuskar, came to see Swamiji along with two friends, one of whom was a Punjabi. Knowing this, Swamiji talked with them very earnestly about the grim

food situation facing Punjab. Swamiji's mind at that time was so occupied with the terrible famine going on in India that he did not discuss spiritual matters with Deuskar and his friends. Before taking leave the Punjabi gentleman said to Swamiji, 'Sir, we expected to hear something spiritual from you today. But, unfortunately, our conversation drifted towards mundane matters. I believe it was a mere waste of time.'

On hearing this, Swamiji became very serious and said, 'Sir, as long as even a stray dog of my country remains without food, my religion will be to feed and take care of him. All else is either non-religion or false religion!' The three visitors were struck dumb by Swamiji's flaming words. Years after his passing away, Pandit Deuskar, when relating the incident, said that those words remained ever grafted on his mind and made him realize, for the first time, what true patriotism meant.

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A north Indian pundit once came to Swamiji with the intention of outshining him in a discussion on Vedanta, but Swamiji was in no mood then to discuss Vedanta. He was constantly thinking about the people groaning under the impact of the country-wide famine. He said, 'Punditji, first of all try to ameliorate the terrible distress that is prevailing everywhere, to still the heart-rending cry of your hungry countrymen for a morsel of food ; after that come to me to have a debate on the Vedanta. To stake one's whole life and soul to save thousands who are dying of starvation—this is the essence of the religion of the Vedanta.'

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Swamiji was staying at the garden-house of Gopal Lal Seal in Cossipore. One day a young man came to him and said, 'Swamiji, I have visited many places and have had intimate association with many religious sects ; yet I find I do not as yet understand what Truth is. Everyday I close

the door and sit in meditation, but peace remains as elusive as ever ! Swamiji, tell me why ?'

Swamiji patiently listened to him, then he said : My child, if you want peace, you have to do exactly the opposite of what you have been doing so long. You have to keep your door open, you have to look around. If you do, you will be surprised to find how many people are anxiously waiting for your help ! Help them, feed them, give them water to drink—serve them as much as you can. I guarantee, you will get peace.

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The day after his return from Deoghar, Swamiji told his brother monks that he wanted them to get ready to go to all corners of the world to spread the gospel of their Master as did the disciples of Buddha. To begin with, Swamiji chose two of his disciples, Swami Virajananda and Swami Prakashananda for this mission and asked them to go to East Bengal (now Bangladesh).

When Swami Virajananda said, 'Swamiji, I know nothing ! What shall I preach ?', Swamiji replied, 'Then go and preach that. That in itself is a wonderful message !'

The disciple was still unconvinced. He prayed to Swamiji that before being asked to plunge into activities, he be allowed to realize his Self by practising further spiritual disciplines. Swamiji did not like this idea and admonished his young disciple, 'You will go to hell if you seek your own salvation ! Kill that desire first. That is the hardest of all disciplines. Try hard for the salvation of others if you want to scale the peak of spiritual attainment.'

Then he softened his voice and said, 'Work, my children, work heart and soul without caring for results. What if you go to hell while trying to do good to others ? I say that is infinitely better than winning heaven only for yourself.'

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One day at the home of Balaram Basu, Swamiji was talking enthusiastically about the Vedas before his disciple Sharat Chandra Chakravarty. Girish Chandra Ghosh, Sri Ramakrishna's householder disciple, was also present. Both of them were listening to Swamiji's captivating exposition of the subject. But after Swamiji had spoken at length, Girish said to him : Naren, let me ask you one question. I know you have studied the Vedas and Vedanta philosophy in great detail, but do these scriptures suggest a way out of the poverty, scarcity of food and all the other great problems plaguing the country ? Mrs———, who used to prepare meals for fifty people every day, has been without food for the past three days : a housewife was killed by rowdies the other day, and a helpless widow I know has been dispossessed of her property by her relatives. Can your Vedas give them justice ? Can your holy scriptures redress their sufferings and assure us that such things will never happen again ?

Girish went on depicting the dismal picture of society and cited more examples. Swamiji sat speechless. Tears rolled down his cheeks, and he hurriedly left the room. Then Girish said to Sarat Chandra : Did you notice what a great heart your Guru has ? I love and respect Swamiji not because he is well-versed in the Vedas, but because of his infinite love and his readiness to share the sufferings of others. You saw yourself just now how bitterly he wept when he heard about the miseries of his countrymen ! It is neither the Vedas nor the Vedanta but love and compassion for humanity that govern Vivekananda.

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Swamiji's health rapidly deteriorated after he returned from the West. His physicians advised him to take a complete rest, so he went to Darjeeling. But after a few days, he received news that plague had broken out in Calcutta. How Swamiji felt at that time is known from a letter he wrote to Josephine MacLeod in April 29, 1898. In that letter he said that he had decided to sacrifice his life

in the service of the plague-stricken people of the city in which he was born and that would be the best way to attain Nirvana. Swamiji rushed to Calcutta, and on reaching there found that the fear that afflicted the minds of the people of Calcutta was deadlier than the disease itself. People were deserting their homes in sheer panic. Swamiji understood the gravity of the situation and printed a plague-manifesto to dispel their fear. The manifesto, which was distributed among the people, stated that the Ramakrishna Mission was there to help them in every way possible. He also decided to open service centres in different parts of the city. But the relief work required much money. When a brother disciple asked Swamiji where the money would come from, he replied without the slightest hesitation : 'We are monks. We can sleep under the trees and live on alms. If I can save the lives of millions I do not mind selling the Math.'

Fortunately this extreme measure was not needed as money came through other sources. But Swamiji's declaration revealed his heart, his boundless love and compassion for his fellowmen. How much he had to bleed to procure a piece of land for the Math, his life's dream. Still, he was ready to sell away that Math, if by that he could help the suffering people.

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Swamiji's love for humanity was so profound that when alone he often shed tears thinking about the miseries of men. The following incident happened after his first visit to America : One day Swami Turiyananda came to see him at the residence of Balaram Basu where he had been staying. Turiyananda found Swamiji walking alone on the verandah. He was so lost in thought that he did not notice that his brother monk had come to meet him. After a little while, Swamiji began to hum a well-known song of Mirabai, with tears rolling down his cheeks. Then he covered his face with both hands, leaned on the railings and, continued to sing : 'Oh, nobody

understands my sorrow ! He, who does not bleed, does not feel the pain !' Narrating this incident, Swami Turiyananda later said, 'His voice pierced my heart like an arrow, moving me to tears. Not knowing the cause of Swamiji's sorrow I was very uneasy. But it soon flashed upon me that it was a tremendous universal sympathy with the suffering and oppressed that was the cause of his mood.'

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An interesting thing happened when Swamiji went to the United States for the second time. One day when he was walking along the bank of a river, he found a group of youngsters shooting at a string of eggshells bobbing up on the water. The youths tried in turn, but none could hit the target. Swamiji, who was watching all this, felt amused. He could not suppress his smile and this did not escape the attention of one of the young men who said in a challenging tone : 'The task is not as easy as it looks, sir. Let us see how you do it !'

Swamiji said nothing, but took the gun from the boy's hand and hit twelve shells in succession. The youths were awe-struck and supposed Swamiji was a brilliant marksman. Swamiji could read their minds. He told them he had never in his life fired a shot before and that the secret of his success was concentration.

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On his way back to India, Swamiji stopped off in Cairo. He had with him a number of his Western disciples and friends. One day while taking a walk, Swamiji and his party lost their way and found themselves in a red-light district. It took no time for Swamiji's friends to understand they were in the wrong place. They made an attempt to take Swamiji away from the squalid, ill-smelling street. But Swamiji detached himself from the group and approached the half-clad women sitting on a way-side bench. He looked at them with pity and

muttered : 'Poor children ! Poor creatures ! They have put their divinity into their beauty !' He began to weep and the women, who had been making silly gestures at him became embarrassed and hung their heads in shame. One of them kissed the hem of his robe and said : 'Here is one who has seen God !' Turning to Swamiji she said : 'You are a Man of God !' Another woman covered her face in remorse.

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Once when Swamiji was travelling by train, a poor Muslim hawker selling boiled gram boarded his compartment. As soon as Swamiji saw him, he started speaking with the brahmachari accompanying him about eating gram. 'You see', Swamiji said, 'gram makes you strong'. And then pointing at the vendor, he said to the brahmachari, 'How about having some ?' The brahmachari knew Swamiji's nature well. He readily understood that what Swamiji wanted was to help the poor man and not to eat his gram. So the brahmachari bought gram worth one paise but paid the man four annas.

Swamiji was very sharp-eyed. He asked the brahmachari how much he had paid. 'Four annas', replied the brahmachari. Then Swamiji said to him affectionately, 'My child that is too little ! He has a wife and children at home. Give him a rupee.' The Brahmachari followed Swamiji's instruction. Swamiji, however, did not eat the gram.

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Swami Vijnanananda once told of an incident which revealed Swamiji's superhuman sensibility. Swami Vijnanananda used to stay in the room next to Swamiji's at Belur Math. One night he woke up at 2 a.m., came out of his room and was surprised to find Swamiji moving restlessly along the portico. Vijnanananda asked him, 'Swamiji, why are you not in bed ? Don't you feel sleepy ?'

'I was sleeping well', said Swamiji, 'but suddenly I felt a sort of shock and woke up. I am sure there has been an accident somewhere in the world and that many people must have lost their lives.'

Swami Vijnanananda did not take Swamiji's words seriously at first. It seemed incredible to him that Swamiji while lying on his bed could have become aware of a far off occurrence. But to his amazement, he read in the newspaper the next morning that many people were killed in a volcanic eruption near Fiji. The eruption had occurred at the exact moment when Swamiji had received that shock.

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Swamiji often used to tell his disciples about the past glories of India, but at the same time he said that India in the future would be even greater. One day at Belur Math he said to them, 'Believe me, I have had a vision in which I saw clearly what would happen to India in the coming four or five centuries.'

On another occasion he made a series of remarkable predictions. He said : 'India will be free in another fifty years and freedom will come in an unusual way. A great war will flare up within twenty years, and if the western nations do not give up their stark materialism, another world war is inevitable.' Swamiji also prophesied that 'India, when independent, will embrace the materialism of the West and attain material prosperity to such an extent that it will surpass its past records in that field.' He also foretold that 'Countries such as America would become increasingly spiritual because they will have realized from the height of material prosperity the simple truth that gross materialism cannot give eternal peace.'

In another context Swamiji said that if and when the British should leave India, there would be a great danger of India's being conquered by China.

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Josephine MacLeod, the great admirer of Swamiji, who thought of Swamiji as her friend, once asked him: 'Swamiji, how can I best help you?' Swamiji's answer was, 'Love India!'

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Speaking of himself, Swamiji once said that he was a 'Condensed India.' Indeed, his love for India was so profound that eventually he became its embodiment. Vivekananda and India became one. Sister Nivedita echoed this conviction when she said: 'India was Swamiji's greatest passion.... India throbbed in his breast, India beat in his pulses, India was his daydream, India was his nightmare. Not only that. He himself became India. He was the embodiment of India in flesh and blood. He was India, he was Bharat—the very symbol of her spirituality, her purity, her wisdom, her power, her vision and her destiny.'

When we study Swamiji's life we cannot but be convinced that he was unique in all respects. There was no one, who better loved India, who was more proud of this country, who worked more zealously for its well-being. Yet, it is also true that nobody lashed out at the imbecility, cowardice and incompetence of Indians as mercilessly and vigorously as he did. He touched both extremes for he knew Indians intimately. Indeed, Swamiji could read India as meticulously as a loving mother can read her child's mind and know better than the child itself what it needs. We get a perfect picture of India, its past, present and future from Swamiji's thoughts. That is why Rabindranath Tagore said to Romain Rolland: 'Read Vivekananda if you want to know India.'

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SOME GREAT MEN ON SWAMIJI*

LEO TOLSTOY

Alexander Shifman writes: 'Among the Indian philosophers of the medieval period he studied more thoroughly Shankara and, among the more recent, Ramakrishna Paramahansa and his pupil Swami Vivekananda....

'During his last years Tolstoy did not concern himself with Ramakrishna except selecting from his works passages for inclusion in his new collections of ancient sayings which he had compiled previously. At this time he was considerably more interested in Vivekananda's teachings....

'Tolstoy's acquaintance with Vivekananda's philosophy dates back to September, 1896, when for the first time he noted in his diary that he had read "a charming book on Indian wisdom" which had been sent to him. [Complete collection of Works of Tolstoy, Vol. 53, p. 106]. This was a series of lectures on ancient Indian philosophy delivered by Vivekananda in New York in the winter of 1895-96. A. K. Datt, the Indian scholar, who sent to Tolstoy this book, wrote to him :

"You will be pleased to know that your doctrines are in complete agreement with the Indian philosophy at the period of its highest achievement, the most ancient to reach us". [The letter was not published. It is kept in Tolstoy's Archives. The name of the book is The Philosophy of Yoga (Raja Yoga) by Swami Vivekananda, New York, 1896. In 1911 the book was translated into Russian.]

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* Please see Appendix I for brief introductions to these great men.

'Tolstoy wrote in reply to this letter that he liked the book and he noted with approval the reasoning on what was man's "self". [Complete collection of Works of Tolstoy, Vol. 69, p. 146]

'In Vivekananda's passionate tirades directed against the contemporary bourgeois civilization, in his affirmations of the priority of the spiritual essence of man over his "material cover" Tolstoy heard the echoes of the early teachings of the ancient Indians and particularly many motifs of the Vedas which were congenial to him.'

'The second book by Vivekananda which Tolstoy read was a collection of *Speeches and Articles* (in English) sent to him in 1907 by his acquaintance I. F. Nazhivin. When Nazhivin asked him whether he would like to have this book, Tolstoy replied on 7 July 1907 : "Please send me the book by the Brahmin. The reading of such books is more than a pleasure, it is a broadening of the soul." [Complete collection of Works of Tolstoy, Vol. 77, p. 151]

'In 1908, I. F. Nazhivin published a collection of articles, *Voices of the Peoples*, which included Vivekananda's articles "The Hymn of the Peoples" and "God and Man". The latter article made a strong impression on Tolstoy. "This is unusually good," he wrote to Nazhivin, after reading it.' [Complete collection of Works of Tolstoy, Vol. 78, p. 84]...

'Once Tolstoy praised Vivekananda for his "excellent polemics with Schopenhauer about God" and he noted the English of the Indian philosopher : "What English has Vivekananda ! He has learnt all its subtleties." [D. P. Makovitsky, Yasnaya Polyana Notes, entry of 3 July 1908]

'In March 1909, preparing a list of new popular books for the people, Tolstoy also included in the plan of publication the Sayings of Ramakrishna and Vivekananda, [Works of Tolstoy, Vol. 57, p. 40] and, in April of the same year, he informed the Orientalist N.O. Einhorn : "We are preparing a publication of selected thoughts of Vivekananda whom I appreciate very much." [Works of Tolstoy, Vol. 79, p. 142]. But this publication did not materialise."[1]

RABINDRANATH TAGORE

If you want to know India, study Vivekananda. In him everything is positive and nothing negative.[2]

Some time ago Vivekananda said that there was the power of Brahman in every man, that Narayana [i.e. God] wanted to have our service through the poor. This is what I call real gospel. This gospel showed the path of infinite freedom from man's tiny egocentric self beyond the limits of all selfishness. This was no sermon relating to a particular ritual, nor was it a narrow injunction to be imposed upon one's external life. This naturally contained in it protest against untouchability—not because that would make for political freedom, but because that would do away with the humiliation of man—a curse which in fact puts to shame the self of us all.

Vivekananda's gospel marked the awakening of man in his fullness and that is why it inspired our youth to the diverse courses of liberation through work and sacrifice.[3]

In recent times in India, it was Vivekananda alone who preached a great message which is not tied to any do's and don'ts. Addressing one and all in the nation, he said : In every one of you there is the power of Brahman (God) ; the God in the poor desires you to serve Him. This message has roused the heart of the youths in a most pervasive way. That is why this message has borne fruit in the service of the nation in diverse ways and in diverse forms of sacrifice. This message has, at one and the same time, imparted dignity and respect to man along with energy and power. The strength that this message has imparted to man is not confined to a particular point ; nor is it limited to repetitions of some physical movements. It has, indeed, invested his life with a wonderful dynamism in various spheres. There at the source of the adventurous activities of today's youth of Bengal is the message of Vivekananda—which calls the soul of man, not his fingers.[4]

SRI AUROBINDO

It was in religion first that the soul of India awoke and triumphed. There were always indications, always great forerunners, but it was when the flower of the educated youth of Calcutta bowed down at the feet of an illiterate Hindu ascetic, a self-illuminated ecstatic and 'mystic' without a single trace or touch of the alien thought or education upon him that the battle was won. The going forth of Vivekananda, marked out by the Master as the heroic soul destined to take the world between his two hands and change it, was the first visible sign to the world that India was awake not only to survive but to conquer.... Once the soul of the nation was awake in religion, it was only a matter of time and opportunity for it to throw itself on all spiritual and intellectual activities in the national existence and take possession of them.[5]

Vivekananda was a soul of puissance if ever there was one, a very lion among men, but the definite work he has left behind is quite incommensurate with our impression of his creative might and energy. We perceive his influence still working gigantically, we know not well how, we know not well where, in something that is not yet formed, something leonine, grand, intuitive, upheaving that has entered the soul of India and we say, 'Behold, Vivekananda still lives in the soul of his Mother and in the souls of her children.'[6]

The visit of Swami Vivekananda to America and the subsequent work of those who followed him did more for India than a hundred London congress could effect. That is the true way of awakēning sympathy,—by showing ourselves to the nations as a people with a great past and ancient civilisation who still possess something of the genius and character of our forefathers, have still something to give the world and therefore deserve freedom,—by proof of our manliness and fitness, not by mendicancy.[7]

BRAHMABANDHAV UPADHYAY

For a few days I went on a trip to Bolpur. On my return as I stepped down at the Howrah Station, someone said, 'Swami Vivekananda passed away yesterday.' At once an acute pain, sharp like a razor—not the least exaggerated—thrust into my heart. When the intensity of the pain subsided, I wondered, 'How will Vivekananda's work go on ? He has, of course, well-trained and educated brother-disciples. Why, they will do his work !' Yet an inspiration flickered in me : 'You give your best with whatever you possess by trying to translate into action Vivekananda's dream of conquest of the West.' That very moment I vowed I would sail to England. So long I never even dreamt of visiting England. But on that day at the Howrah Station I decided I must go to England and establish Vedanta there. Then I understood who Vivekananda was. He whose inspiration can drive a humble person like me across the seas, is not, really, an ordinary man. Shortly afterwards I left Calcutta and sailed for England with a sum of only twenty-seven rupees in my pocket. Finally, I reached England and delivered lectures at the Oxford and Cambridge Universities on Vedanta. Celebrated [British] scholars listened to my expositions and expressed their desire to learn the science of Vedanta by appointing Hindu scholars. I did not publish the letters of appreciation which those scholars wrote to me. How profound was the influence of Vedanta in England could be understood if I had published those letters. I am just an ordinary man. It was all like a dream that such a great work was accomplished by me. All these were miracles brought about by the inspiration and power of Vivekananda behind me—this is what I believe. That is why sometimes I think, who is Vivekananda ? The greatness of Vivekananda surpasses my power of assessment as I think of the stupendous programme of work he had boldly initiated.

On another occasion I came across Vivekananda by

the side of Hedua Park in Calcutta. I said to him, 'Brother, why are you keeping silent ? Come, raise a stir of Vedanta in Calcutta. I will make all arrangements. You just come and appear before the public.' Vivekananda's voice grew heavy with pathos. He said, 'Brother Bhavani, I will not live long (it was just six months before his death). I am busy now with the construction of my Math, and making arrangements for its proper upkeep. I have no leisure now.' At the pathetic earnestness of his words I understood that day that his heart was tormented with a passion and pain. Passion for whom ? Pain for whom ? Passion for the country, pain for the country. The knowledge and culture of the Aryans were being destroyed and crushed. What was gross and un-Aryan was deflating what was finer and Aryan. And yet there is no response, no pain in your heart ?—this [callous indifference of his countrymen] evoked a painful response in Vivekananda's heart. The response was so deep that it struck at the root of the conscience of America and Europe. I think of that pain and passion in Vivekananda, and ask, who is Vivekananda ? Is it ever possible that passion for the motherland becomes embodied ? If it is, then only one can understand Vivekananda.[8]

Swamiji ! I was your friend in youth. How much of merry-making I have enjoyed with you ! With you I went on picnics and spent hours in talks and conversations. But then I never knew that there was a lion's strength in your soul, a volcanic pain and passion for India in your heart. Today with all my humble strength I have come to follow your way.... In the midst of this fierce struggle, whenever I get torn and tossed, whenever despondency comes and overwhelms my heart, I look up to the great ideal you set forth, I recollect your leonine strength, meditate on the profound depths of your agony—then all at once my weariness withers away. A divine light and a divine strength comes from somewhere and fulfils my mind and heart.[9]

BAL GANGADHAR TILAK

It is doubtful if there is any Hindu who does not know the name of Sri Vivekananda Swami. There has been extraordinary advancement of material science in the nineteenth century. Under the circumstances, to present the spiritual science prevailing in India for thousands of years by wonderful exposition and then to kindle admiration and respect among the western scholars, and, at the same time, to create a sympathetic attitude for India, the mother of spiritual science, can only be an achievement of superhuman power. With English education, the flood of material science spread so fast that it required extraordinary courage and extraordinary genius to stand against that phenomenon and change its direction. Before Swami Vivekananda the Theosophical Society began this work. But it is an undisputed fact that it was Swami Vivekananda who first held aloft the banner of Hinduism as a challenge against the material science of the West.... It was Swami Vivekananda who took on his shoulders this stupendous task of establishing the glory of Hinduism in different countries across the borders. And he, with his erudition, oratorical power, enthusiasm and inner force, laid that work upon a solid foundation.... Twelve centuries ago Sankaracharya was the only great personality, who not only spoke of the purity of our religion, not only uttered in words that this religion was our strength and wealth, not only said that it was our sacred duty to preach this religion in the length and breadth of the world—but also brought all this into action. Swami Vivekananda is a person of that stature—who appeared towards the last half of the nineteenth century.[10]

BEPIN CHANDRA PAL

I

Vivekananda, however, does not stand alone. He is

indissolubly bound up with his Master, Paramahansa Ramakrishna. The two stand almost organically bound up, so far as the modern man, not only in India but in the larger world of our day, is concerned. The modern man can only understand Paramahansa in and through Vivekananda, even as Vivekananda can be understood only in the light of the life of his Master. The Master was a great spiritual force. He was therefore inevitably a mystery to a generation possessed by the ununderstood slogans of what is called rationalism, which really means lack of that imagination which is the soul of all spiritual life. Imagination is not fancy. It is really the power to cognize, if not to visualize, that which stands above not only the sensuous but also the intellectual plane. The generation to which Ramakrishna belonged, lacked this imagination. He was, therefore, a mystery to it. It was given to Vivekananda to interpret and present the soul of Paramahansa Ramakrishna and the message of his life to this generation in such terms as would be comprehended by them.

Ramakrishna Paramahansa belonged to no sect or denomination or to put it in another way, he belonged to all sects and denominations both Indian and non-Indian. He was a true Universalist, but his Universalism was not the Universalism of Abstraction. He did not subtract the particularities of different religions to realize his universal religion. With him the Universal and the particular always went together like the sun and shadow. He realized therefore the reality of the Universal in and through the infinite particularities of life and thought. Vivekananda clothed this realization of his Master in the language of modern Humanism.

Ramakrishna Paramahansa's God was not the God of logic or philosophy, but the God of direct, personal, inner experience. Ramakrishna believed in his God not on the authority of ancient scriptures or traditions, nor on the authority of any Guru, but on the testimony of his own direct, personal experiences. He was a Vedantist ; because,

his direct allegiance and early training was in the cult of Shakti. The Shakti cult in Bengal has been built upon Vedantism. But the Vedantism of Ramakrishna Paramahansa could hardly be labelled as Sankara-Vedantism, nor could it be labelled either as any of the different schools of Vaishnava-Vedanta. These labels are for those who borrow their theology from speculations of great thinkers. But Ramakrishna Paramahansa did not belong to this class. He was not a philosopher ; he was not a Pandit, whether modern or ancient, he was not a logician ; he was a simple seer. He believed in what he saw.

The seer is always a mystic. So was Paramahansa Ramakrishna : so was Jesus ; so were all the great spiritual leaders of men. The crowd cannot understand them ; least of all are they understood by the learned and the philosophers of their age. Yet they reveal that which all philosophies grope after. Paramahansa Ramakrishna, like Jesus Christ, needed an interpreter to explain him and deliver his message to his age. Jesus found such an interpreter in St. Paul ; Ramakrishna found him in Vivekananda. Vivekananda therefore must be understood in the light of the realizations of Paramahansa Ramakrishna.

II

The story of Vivekananda's conversion has not as yet been told. I do not know if anybody knows how this miracle happened. Vivekananda had been a rationalist and a deist, though he fancied that he was a theist. His early religious associations were with the Brahmo Samaj. They were not very congenial to the development of faith in saints and seers. Ramakrishna Paramahansa attracted however many members of the Brahmo Samaj by his great psychic powers and more particularly by his passionate love of God. But they never were able to open the secret springs of the life and realizations of the Paramahansa.

They saw him through the prism of the intellect. The Paramahansa never really opened to most of them the secret chambers of his piety. Vivekananda was favoured by the Paramahansa in this matter.

Paramahansa Ramakrishna saw into the innermost composition of Vivekananda's nature and spirit and recognized in him a fit instrument for delivering the message of his own life. This is the real story of Vivekananda's conversion. It is the story of the conversion also of Saul, though it was set in a different psychological setting. Vivekananda felt drawn to his Master by what he hardly knew. It was the operation of what is now called soul-force. When one soul touches another on this deep spiritual plane, the two are united for ever by unbreakable spiritual bonds. The two henceforth become practically one ; the Master working in and through the disciple, the disciple not even knowing that he is dancing to the tune of the Master. People call it inspiration. Vivekananda worked after his conversion under the inspiration of his Master.

III

The message of Vivekananda, though delivered in the term of the popular Vedantic speculation, was really the message of his Master to the modern man. Vivekananda's message was really the message of modern humanity. His appeal to his own people was, 'Be men.' The man of religion in India had been a mediaeval man. His religion was generally a religion of the other world. It was a religion that enjoined renunciation of the world and all the obligations of the physical and the social life. But this was not the real message of Paramahansa Ramakrishna. He was as much a Vedantin as a Vaishnava. His ideal of piety was a synthesis between these two rival schools of Hindu religion. His cult of the Mother was really the cult of 'Bhakti', or love of God, realized in the terms of the human motherhood. As with the Bengal Vaishanavas, so

with the Paramahansa, the Ultimate Reality was not an abstraction. It was not carnal, but therefore it was not without form. And the real form of the Ultimate Reality is the Human Form—not the sensuous form of man which we see with our eyes, but the spiritual form which stands behind it, invisible to mortal eye. Man and God are generically one.

To help man to realize his essential divinity is the object of all religious culture. This is what Vivekananda really meant when he appealed to his people to be men. In the ritual of divine worship of the Brahmin, is used the following text which says : 'I am Divine. I am none other. I am not subject to grief and bereavement. I am of the form of the True, the Self-conscious and the Eternally Present. I am by nature eternally free.' This was the message really of his Master as delivered to the modern world by Vivekananda.

It is the message of freedom, not in a negative sense, but in its positive and most comprehensive implications. Freedom means removal of all outside restraint. But constituted as we are, we cannot cut ourselves off from all outside relations, whether with our natural environments or our social environments. Such isolation spells death both physically and spiritually. The law of life is therefore not isolation, but association, not non-co-operation but co-operation. And real freedom is achieved not through war, but through peace only. War or renunciation or isolation has a place no doubt in the scheme of life, but only a temporary place as a means to the attainment of the ultimate end which is not perpetuation of the inevitable conflict of evolution, but the settlement and cancellation of these conflicts in a closer and permanent union. Freedom again is one. Freedom from the domination of our passions and appetites is the first step in the realization of the ideal. Freedom from the fear of brother-man is the next step. Freedom from the domination of any external authority must follow next. In this way from personal freedom, through social freedom including

political freedom, man must attain his real freedom. And when he attains it, he realizes finally that he and his God are one. This is the message of the Vedanta as interpreted by Vivekananda. This is really the message of his Master to the modern world.[11]

Some people in India think that very little fruit has come of the lectures that Swami Vivekananda delivered in England, and that his friends and admirers exaggerate his work. But on coming here I see that he has exerted a marked influence everywhere. In many parts of England I have met with men who deeply regard and venerate Vivekananda. Though I do not belong to his sect, and though it is true that I have differences of opinion with him, I must say that Vivekananda has opened the eyes of a great many here and broadened their hearts. Owing to his teaching, most people here now believe firmly that wonderful spiritual truths lie hidden in the ancient Hindu scriptures. Not only has he brought about this feeling, but he succeeded in establishing a golden relation between England and India. From what I quoted on 'Vivekanandism' from *The Dead Pulpit* by Mr Haweis, you have already understood that owing to the spread of Vivekananda's doctrines, many hundreds of people have seceded from Christianity. And how deep and extensive his work has been in this country will readily appear from the following incident.

Yesterday evening I was going to visit a friend in the Southern part of London. I lost my way and was looking from the corner of a street thinking in which direction I should go, when a lady accompanied by a boy came to me, with the intention, it seemed, of showing me the way.... She said to me, 'Sir, perhaps you are looking to find your way. May I help you?' ... She showed me my way and said, 'From certain papers I learned that you are coming to London. At the very first sight of you I was telling my son, "Look there is 'Swami Vivekananda'."' As I had to catch the train in a hurry, I had not time to tell her that I was not Vivekananda, and compelled to go off

speedily. However, I was really surprised to see that the lady possessed such great veneration for Vivekananda even before she knew him personally. I felt highly gratified at the agreeable incident, and thanked my *Gerua* turban which had given me so much honour. Besides the incident, I have seen here many educated English gentlemen, who have come to revere India and who listened eagerly to any religious or spiritual truths, if they belong to India.[12]

MAHATMA GANDHI

I have come here [Belur Math] to pay my homage and respect to the revered memory of Swami Vivekananda, whose birthday is being celebrated today [6 February 1921]. I have gone through his works very thoroughly, and after having gone through them, the love that I had for my country became a thousand-fold. I ask you, young men, not to go away empty-handed without imbibing something of the spirit of the place where Swami Vivekananda lived and died.[13]

JAWAHARLAL NEHRU

Rooted in the past and full of pride in India's prestige, Vivekananda was yet modern in his approach to life's problems and was a kind of bridge between the past of India and her present....He was a fine figure of a man, imposing, full of poise and dignity, sure of himself and his mission, and at the same time full of a dynamic and fiery energy and a passion to push India forward. He came as a tonic to the depressed and demoralized Hindu mind and gave it self-reliance and some roots in the past.[14]

I do not know how many of the younger generation read the speeches and the writings of Swami Vivekananda. But I can tell you that many of my

generation were very powerfully influenced by him and I think that it would do a great deal of good to the present generation if they also went through Swami Vivekananda's writings and speeches, and they would learn much from them. That would, perhaps, as some of us did, enable us to catch a glimpse of that fire that raged in Swami Vivekananda's mind and heart and which ultimately consumed him at an early age. Because there was fire in his heart—the fire of a great personality coming out in eloquent and ennobling language—it was no empty talk that he was indulging in. He was putting his heart and soul into the words he uttered. Therefore he became a great orator, not with the orators' flashes and flourishes but with a deep conviction and earnestness of spirit. And so he influenced powerfully the minds of many in India and two or three generations of young men and women have no doubt been influenced by him....

Much has happened which perhaps makes some forget those who came before and who prepared India and shaped India in those early and difficult days. If you read Swami Vivekananda's writings and speeches, the curious thing you will find is that they are not old. It was told 56* years ago, and they are fresh today because, what he wrote or spoke about dealt with certain fundamental matters and aspects of our problems or the world's problems. Therefore they do not become old. They are fresh even though you read them now.

He gave us something which brings us, if I may use the word, a certain pride in our inheritance. He did not spare us. He talked of our weaknesses and our failings too. He did not wish to hide anything. Indeed he should not. Because we have to correct those failings, he deals with those failings also. Sometimes he strikes hard at us, but sometimes points out the great things for which India stood and which even in the days of India's downfall made her, in some measure, continue to be great.

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* Jawaharlal Nehru delivered this speech in 1949.

So what Swamiji has written and said is of interest and must interest us and is likely to influence us for a long time to come. He was no politician in the ordinary sense of the word and yet he was, I think, one of the great founders—if you like, you may use any other word—of the national modern movement of India, and a great number of people who took more or less an active part in that movement in a later date drew their inspiration from Swami Vivekananda.

Directly or indirectly he has powerfully influenced the India of today. And I think that our younger generation will take advantage of this fountain of wisdom, of spirit and fire, that flows through Swami Vivekananda.

...Men like Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, men like Swami Vivekananda and men like Mahatma Gandhi are great unifying forces, great constructive geniuses of the world not only in regard to the particular teachings that they taught, but their approach to the world and their conscious and unconscious influence on it is of the most vital importance to us.[15]

SUBHAS CHANDRA BOSE

In the eighties of the last century, two prominent religious personalities appeared before the public who were destined to have a great influence on the future course of the new awakening. They were Ramakrishna Paramahansa, the saint, and his disciple Swami Vivekananda.... Ramakrishna preached the gospel of the unity of all religions and urged the cessation of inter-religious strife.... Before he dies, he charged his disciple with the task of propagating his religious teachings in India and abroad and of bringing about an awakening among his countrymen. Swami Vivekananda therefore founded the Ramakrishna Mission, an order of monks, to live and preach the Hindu religion in its purest form in India and abroad, especially in America, and he took an

active part in inspiring every form of healthy national activity. With him religion was the inspirer of nationalism. He tried to infuse into the new generation a sense of pride in India's past, of faith in India's future and a spirit of self-confidence and self-respect. Though the Swami never gave any political message, every one who came into contact with him or his writings developed a spirit of patriotism and a political mentality. So far at least as Bengal is concerned, Swami Vivekananda may be regarded as the spiritual father of the modern nationalist movement. He died very young in 1902, but since his death his influence has been even greater.[16]

I cannot write about Vivekananda without going into raptures. Few indeed could comprehend or fathom him—even among those who had the privilege of becoming intimate with him. His personality was rich, profound and complex and it was this personality—as distinct from his teachings and writings—which accounts for the wonderful influence he has exerted on his countrymen and particularly on Bengalees. This is the type of manhood which appeals to the Bengalee as probably none other. Reckless in his sacrifice, unceasing in his activity, boundless in his love, profound and versatile in his wisdom, exuberant in his emotions, merciless in his attacks but yet simple as a child—he was a rare personality in this world of ours....

Swamiji was a full-blooded masculine personality—and a fighter to the core of his being. He was consequently a worshipper of Shakti and gave a practical interpretation to the Vedanta for the uplift of his countrymen.... I can go on for hours and yet fail to do the slightest justice to that great man. He was so great, so profound, so complex. A Yogi of the highest spiritual level in direct communion with the truth who had for the time being consecrated his whole life to the moral and spiritual uplift of his nation and of humanity, that is how I would describe him. If he had been alive, I would have been at his feet. Modern Bengal is his creation—if I err not.[17]

How shall I express in words my indebtedness to Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda ? It is under their sacred influence that my life got first awakened. Like Nivedita I also regard Ramakrishna and Vivekananda as two aspects of one indivisible personality. If Swamiji had been alive today, he would have been my Guru, that is to say, I would have accepted him as my Master. It is needless to add, however, that as long as I live, I shall be absolutely loyal and devoted to Ramakrishna-Vivekananda.[18]

It is very difficult to explain the versatile genius of Swami Vivekananda. The impact Swami Vivekananda made on the students of our times by his works and speeches far outweighed that made by any other leader of the country. He, as it were, expressed fully their hopes and aspirations. [But] Swamiji cannot be appreciated properly if he is not studied along with Sri Sri Paramahansa Deva. The foundation of the present freedom movement owes its origin to Swamiji's message. If India is to be free, it cannot be a land specially of Hinduism or of Islam—it must be one united land of different religious communities inspired by the ideal of nationalism. [And for that] Indians must accept whole-heartedly the gospel of harmony of religions which is the gospel of Ramakrishna-Vivekananda....

Swamiji harmonized East and West, religion and science, past and present. And that is why he is great. Our countrymen have gained unprecedented self-respect, self-confidence and self-assertion from his teachings.[19]

The harmony of all religions which Ramakrishna Paramahansa accomplished in his life's endeavour, was the keynote of Swamiji's life. And this ideal again is the bed-rock of the nationalism of Future India. Without this concept of harmony of religions and toleration of all creeds, the spirit of national consciousness could not have been built up in this country of ours full of diversities.

The aspiration for freedom manifested itself in various movements since the time of Rammohan Ray. This

aspiration was witnessed in the realm of thought and in social reforms during the nineteenth century, but it was never expressed in the political sphere. This was because the people of India still remained sunk in the stupor of subjugation and thought that the conquest of India by the British was an act of Divine Dispensation. The idea of complete freedom is manifest only in Ramakrishna-Vivekananda towards the end of the nineteenth century. 'Freedom, freedom is the song of the Soul'—this was the message that burst forth from the inner recesses of Swamiji's heart and captivated and almost maddened the entire nation. This truth was embodied in his works, life, conversations, and speeches.

Swami Vivekananda, on the one hand, called man to be real man freed from all fetters and, on the other, laid the foundation for true nationalism in India by preaching the gospel of the harmony of religions.[20]

VINOBA BHAVE

Vivekananda not only made us conscious of our strength, he also pointed out our defects and drawbacks.... India was then steeped in *tamas* (ignorance and unwisdom) and mistook weakness for non-attachment and peace. That is why Vivekananda went so far as to say that criminality was preferable to lethargy and indolence. He made people conscious of the *tamasika* state they were in, of the need to break out of it and stand erect so that they might realize in their own lives the power of the Vedanta. Speaking of those who enjoyed the luxury of studying philosophy and the scriptures in the smugness of their retired life, he said football-playing was better than that type of indulgence. Through a series of *obiter dicta*, he rehabilitated the prestige of India's soul force and pointed out to the *tamoguna* (unwisdom) that had eclipsed her. He taught us : 'The same Soul resides in each and all. If you are convinced of this, it is your duty to treat all as

brothers and serve mankind.' People were inclined to hold that, though all had equal right to the *tattva-jnana* (knowledge of the Spirit), the difference of high and low should be maintained in the day-to-day dealings and relations. Swamiji made us see the truth that *tattva-jnana*, which had no place in our everyday relationship with our fellow beings, and in our activities was useless and inane. He, therefore, advised us to dedicate ourselves to the service of 'Daridranarayana' (God manifested in the hungry, destitute millions) to their upliftment and edification. The word 'Daridranarayana' was coined by Vivekananda and popularized by Gandhiji.[21]

ROMAIN ROLLAND

He [Vivekananda] was energy personified, and action was his message to men. For him, as for Beethoven, it was the root of all the virtues....

His pre-eminent characteristic was kingliness. He was a born king and nobody ever came near him either in India or America without paying homage to his majesty.

When this quite unknown young man of thirty appeared in Chicago at the inaugural meeting of the Parliament of Religions, opened in September 1893, by Cardinal Gibbons, all his fellow-members were forgotten in his commanding presence. His strength and beauty, the grace and dignity of his bearing, the dark light of his eyes, his imposing appearance, and from the moment he began to speak, the splendid music of his rich deep voice enthralled the vast audience of American Anglo-Saxons, previously prejudiced against him on account of his colour. The thought of this warrior prophet of India left a deep mark upon the United States.

It was impossible to imagine him in the second place. Wherever he went he was the first.... Everybody recognised in him at sight the leader, the anointed of God, the man marked with the stamp of the power to

command. A traveller who crossed his path in the Himalayas without knowing who he was, stopped in amazement, and cried, 'Shiva !...'

It was as if his chosen God had imprinted His name upon his forehead....

He was less than forty years of age when the athlete lay stretched upon the pyre....

But the flame of that pyre is still alight today. From his ashes, like those of the Phoenix of old, has sprung anew the conscience of India—the magic bird—faith in her unity and in the Great Message, brooded over from Vedic times by the dreaming spirit of his ancient race—the message for which it must render account to the rest of mankind.

*

Moving as were his [Vivekananda's] lectures at Colombo, and the preaching to the people of Rameswaram—it was for Madras that he reserved his greatest efforts. Madras had been expecting him for weeks in a kind of passionate delirium....

He replied to the frenzied expectancy of the people by his message to India, a conch sounding the resurrection of the land of Rama, of Shiva, of Krishna, and calling the heroic Spirit, the immortal Atman, to march to war. He was a general, explaining his Plan of Campaign, and calling his people to rise *en masse* :

'My India, arise !'...

'For the next fifty years ... let all other vain Gods disappear for that time from our minds. This is the only God that is awake, our own race—everywhere His hands, everywhere His feet, everywhere His ears, He covers everything. All other Gods are sleeping. What vain Gods shall we go after and yet cannot worship the God that we see all round us, the Virat ?... The first of all worship is the worship of the Virat—of those all around us.... These are all our Gods—men and animals, and the first Gods we have to worship are our own countrymen....'

Imagine the thunderous reverberations of these words !...

The storm passed ; it scattered its cataracts of water and fire over the plain, and its formidable appeal to the Force of the Soul, to the God sleeping in man and His illimitable possibilities ! I can see the Mage erect, his arm raised, like Jesus above the tomb of Lazarus in Rembrandt's engraving : with energy flowing from his gesture of command to raise the dead and bring him to life....

Did the dead arise ? Did India, thrilling to the sound of his words, reply to the hope of her herald ? Was her noisy enthusiasm translated into deeds ? At the time nearly all this flame seemed to have been lost in smoke. Two years afterwards Vivekananda declared bitterly that the harvests of young men necessary for his army had not come from India. It is impossible to change in a moment the habits of a people buried in a Dream, enslaved by prejudice, and allowing themselves to fail under the weight of the slightest effort. But the Master's rough scourge made her turn for the first time in her sleep, and for the first time the heroic trumpet sounded in the midst of her dream the Forward March of India, conscious of her God. She never forgot it. From that day the awakening of the torpid Colossus began. If the generation that followed, saw, three years after Vivekananda's death, the revolt of Bengal, the prelude to the great movement of Tilak and Gandhi, if India today has definitely taken part in the collective action of organised masses, it is due to the initial shock, to the mighty 'Lazarus, come forth,' of the message from Madras.

This message of energy had a double meaning : a national and a universal. Although, for the great monk of the Advaita, it was the universal meaning that predominated, it was the other that revived the sinews of India.

*

His words are great music, phrases in the style of

Beethoven, stirring rhythms like the march of Handel choruses. I cannot touch these sayings of his, scattered as they are through the pages of books at thirty years' distance, without receiving a thrill through my body like an electric shock. And what shocks, what transports must have been produced when in burning words they issued from the lips of the hero !

*

India was hauled out of the shifting sands of barren speculation wherein she had been engulfed for centuries, by the hand of one of her own Sannyasins ; and the result was that the whole reservoir of mysticism, sleeping beneath, broke its bounds and spread by a series of great ripples into action. The West ought to be aware of the tremendous energies liberated by these means.

The world finds itself face to face with an awakening India. Its huge prostrate body, lying along the whole length of the immense peninsula, is stretching its limbs and collecting its scattered forces. Whatever the part played in this reawakening by the three generations of trumpeters during the previous century—(the greatest of whom we salute, the genial Precursor : Ram Mohun Roy), the decisive call was the trumpet blast of the lectures delivered at Colombo and Madras.

And the magic watchword was Unity. Unity of every Indian man and woman (and world-unity as well) ; of all the powers of the spirit—dream and action ; reason, love, and work. Unity of the hundred races of India with their hundred different tongues and hundred thousand gods springing from the same religious centre, the core of present and future reconstruction. Unity of the thousand sects of Hinduism. Unity within the vast Ocean of all religious thought and all rivers past and present, Western and Eastern. For—and herein lies the difference between the awakening of Ramakrishna and Vivekananda and that of Ram Mohun Roy and the Brahmo Samaj—in these days India refuses allegiance to the imperious civilisation of the

West, she defends her own ideas, she has stepped into her age-long heritage with the firm intention not to sacrifice any part of it, but to allow the rest of the world to profit by it, and to receive in return the intellectual conquests of the West. The time is past for the pre-eminence of one incomplete and partial civilisation. Asia and Europe, the two giants, are standing face to face as equals for the first time. If they are wise they will work together, and the fruit of their labours will be for all.

This 'greater India', this new India—whose growth politicians and learned men have, ostrich fashion, hidden from us and whose striking effects are now apparent—is impregnated with the soul of Ramakrishna. The twin star of the Paramahansa and the hero who translated his thoughts into action, dominates and guides her present destinies. Its warm radiance is the leaven working within the soil of India and fertilising it. The present leaders of India : the king of thinkers, the king of poets, and the Mahatma—Aurobindo Ghosh, Tagore, and Gandhi—have grown, flowered, and borne fruit under the double constellation of the Swan and the Eagle—a fact publicly acknowledged by Aurobindo and Gandhi....

As for Tagore, whose Goethe-like genius stands at the junction of all the rivers of India, it is permissible to presume that in him are united and harmonised the two currents of the Brahmo Samaj (transmitted to him by his father, the Maharshi) and of the new Vedantism of Ramakrishna and Vivekananda. Rich in both, free in both, he has serenely wedded the West and the East in his own spirit. From the social and national point of view his only public announcement of his ideas was, if I am not mistaken, about 1906 at the beginning of the Swadeshi movement, four years after Vivekananda's death. There is no doubt that the breath of such a forerunner must have played some part in his evolution.

*

I was glad to hear Gandhi's voice quite recently—in

spite of the fact that his temperament is the antithesis of Ramakrishna's or Vivekananda's—remind his brethren of the International Fellowships, whose pious zeal disposed them to evangelise, of the great universal principle of religious 'Acceptation', the same preached by Vivekananda....

At this stage of human evolution, wherein both blind and conscious forces are driving all natures to draw together for 'co-operation or death', it is absolutely essential that the human consciousness should be impregnated with it, until this indispensable principle becomes an axiom : that every faith has an equal right to live, and that there is an equal duty incumbent upon every man to respect that which his neighbour respects. In my opinion Gandhi, when he stated it so frankly, showed himself to be the heir of Ramakrishna.

There is no single one of us who cannot take this lesson to heart. The writer of these lines—he has vaguely aspired to this wide comprehension all through his life—feels only too deeply at this moment how many are his shortcomings in spite of his aspirations ; and he is grateful for Gandhi's great lesson—the same lesson that was preached by Vivekananda, and still more by Ramakrishna—to help him to achieve it.[22]

WILL DURANT

He [Swami Vivekananda] preached to his countrymen a more virile creed than any Hindu had offered them since Vedic days :

It is a man-making religion that we want.... Give up these weakening mysticisms, and be strong.... For the next fifty years... let all other, vain gods disappear from our minds. This is the only God that is awake, our own race, everywhere His hands, everywhere His feet, everywhere His ears ; He covers everything.... The first of all worship is the worship of those all around us.... These are all our

gods—men and animals ; and the first gods we have to worship are our own countrymen.

It was but a step from this to Gandhi.[23]

C. RAJAGOPALACHARI

Swami Vivekananda saved Hinduism and saved India. But for him we would have lost our religion and would not have gained our freedom. We therefore owe everything to Swami Vivekananda. May his faith, his courage and his wisdom ever inspire us so that we may keep safe the treasure we have received from him.[24]

S. RADHAKRISHNAN

We are today at a critical period not merely in the history of our country but in the history of the world. There are many people who think we are on the edge of an abyss. There is distortion of values, there is lowering of standards, there is widespread escapism, a good deal of mass hysteria, and people think of it and collapse in despair, frustration, hopelessness. These are the only things which are open to us. Such a kind of lack of faith in the spirit of man is a treason to the dignity of man. It is an insult to human nature. It is human nature that has brought about all the great changes that have taken place in this world. And if there is any call which Vivekananda made to us, it is to rely on our own spiritual resources.... Man has inexhaustible spiritual resources. His spirit is supreme, man is unique. There is nothing inevitable in this world, and we can ward off the worst dangers and worst disabilities by which we are faced. Only we should not lose hope. He gave us fortitude in suffering, he gave us hope in distress, he gave us courage in despair. He told us : 'Do not be led away by the appearances. Deep down there is a providential will, there is a purpose in this universe. You must try to co-operate with that purpose and try to achieve it.[25]

R. C. MAJUMDAR

Vivekananda championed the cause of Hinduism in the Parliament of Religions held at Chicago (U.S.A.) in 1893 in connection with the celebration of the 400th anniversary of the discovery of America by Columbus. There, in the presence of the representatives of all the religions from almost all the countries in the world, the young monk from India expounded the principles of Vedanta and the greatness of Hinduism with such persuasive eloquence that from the very first he captivated the hearts of vast audience. It would be hardly an exaggeration to say that Swami Vivekananda made a place for Hinduism in the cultural map of the modern world. The civilized nations of the West had hitherto looked down upon Hinduism as a bundle of superstitions, evil institutions, and immoral customs, unworthy of serious consideration in the progressive world of today. Now, for the first time, they not only greeted, with hearty approval, the lofty principles of Hinduism as expounded by Vivekananda, but accorded a very high place to it in the cultures and civilizations of the world. The repercussion of this on the vast Hindu community can be easily imagined. The Hindu intelligentsia were always very sensitive to the criticism of the westerners, particularly the missionaries, regarding the many evils and shortcomings of the Hindu society and religion, as with their rational outlook they could not but admit the force of much of this criticism. They had always to be on the defensive and their attitude was mostly apologetic, whenever there was a comparative estimate of the values of the Hindu and Western culture. They had almost taken for granted the inferiority of their culture *vis a vis* that of the West, which was so confidently asserted by the Western scholars. Now, all on a sudden, the table was turned and the representatives of the West joined in a chorus of applause at the hidden virtues of Hinduism which were hitherto unsuspected either by friends or foes.

It not only restored the self-confidence of the Hindus in their own culture and civilization, but quickened their sense of national pride and patriotism. This sentiment was echoed and re-echoed in the numerous public addresses which were presented to Swami Vivekananda on his home-coming by the Hindus all over India, almost literally from Cape Comorin to the Himalayas. It was a great contribution to the growing Hindu nationalism.

On his return to India, Swami Vivekananda preached the spiritual basis of Hindu civilization and pointed out in his writings and speeches that the spirituality of India was not less valuable, nor less important for the welfare of humanity, than the much vaunted material greatness of the West which has dazzled our eyes. He was never tired of asking the Indians to turn their eyes, dazed by the splendour of the West, to their own ideals and institutions. By a comparative estimate of the real values of the Hindu ideals and institutions and those of the West he maintained the superiority of the former and asked his countrymen never to exchange gold for tinsels....

But Vivekananda was not prejudiced against the West nor insensible to the value of her achievements. He frankly admitted that Indian culture was neither spotless nor perfect. It has to learn many things from the West, but without sacrificing its true character.

Swami Vivekananda combined in himself the role of a great saint and fervid nationalist. He placed Indian nationalism on the high pedestal of past glory, and it embraced the teeming millions of India both high and low, rich and poor. He devoted his life to the awakening of national consciousness and many of his eloquent appeals would stir the national sentiments of India even today to their very depths....

Though an ascetic, Vivekananda was a patriot of patriots. The thought of restoring the pristine glory of India by resuscitating among her people the spiritual vitality which was dormant, but not dead, was always the uppermost thought in his mind....

This great *Sannyasin* who had left his hearth and home at the call of his spiritual *guru*, Sri Ramakrishna, and delved deeply into spiritual mysticism, was never tired of preaching that what India needs today is not so much religion or philosophy, of which she has enough, but food for her hungry millions, social justice for the low classes, strength and energy for her emasculated people and a sense of pride and prestige as a great nation of the world. He made a trumpet call to all Indians to shed fear of all kinds and stand forth as men by imbibing *shakti* (energy and strength), by reminding them that they were the particles of the Divine according to the eternal truth preached by the Vedanta. The precepts and example of this great *Sannyasin* galvanized the current of national life, infused new hopes and inspirations, and placed the service to the motherland on a religious level....

Swami Vivekananda thus gave a spiritual basis to Indian nationalism. The lessons of the Vedanta and *Bhagavadgita* permeated the lives and activities of many nationalists, and many a martyr, inspired by his teachings, endured extreme sufferings and sacrifices with a cheerful heart, fearlessly embraced death, and calmly bore the inhuman tortures, worse than death, which were sometimes inflicted upon them.[26]

SUNITI KUMAR CHATTERJI

Vivekananda appeared to me immediately to be a man who was intensely moved by the sufferings of Humanity, and particularly of Humanity in India. Some of his tirades against middle class and upper class societies in this matter moved us to the depths of our being. He discovered for us the greatness of Man, and particularly of men in the humbler walks of life who were the despised and the denied in our Indian society. At the same time, he brought home to us the value of Indian thought at its highest and pristine best, as in the *Vedanta*. He was able to

convince us that what our ancestors had left in the *Vedanta* Philosophy was of permanent value, not only for us in India but also for the rest of Humanity. This put heart in us, and made us feel a new kind of elation as members of a people who have always had a mission and a sacred task to serve Humanity. The Hindus as a race were losing their nerve, and it was Vivekananda who helped us to regain this nerve which we were losing. There was a lot of unthinking and unsympathetic criticism of our ways and our life, particularly from among Christian missionaries of the older type, and this was demolished by Vivekananda. All this made us hold him very close to our heart, and to think of him as a great master and as a new kind of incarnation who came down to earth to lead us into the good life and the life of the strong man.

Vivekananda, in the first instance, knocked off a lot of nonsense in our Hindu social life, and drew our attention to the Eternal Verities and not to the ephemeral accidentals—social usages and such like—in our life. He was a sworn enemy of what we now call in India *Casteism*. *Untouchability* was something which he abhorred both as a *Sannyasin* and as a lay Hindu. He coined the word which is very commonly used in our Indian English—'don't-touchism'. His heart overflowed with love and sympathy for the masses, whom he wanted to serve with religious zeal—serve as a believer in the *Vedanta* which sees God in all life. He coined a new word for our Indian languages—*Daridra-Narayana* or a 'God in the poor and the lowly.' This word has been accepted by the whole of India, and in a way it brings in a sense of responsibility for the average man. He has to look upon the poor and the humble, the suffering ones and the frustrated ones of society, as if they were deities incarnate or fragments of God, to serve whom was to serve God. Mahatma Gandhi's revival of the old expression which was used in Gujarati by the Vaishnava poets of Gujarat, namely, *Hari-jana* or 'the Men of God' was a very fine expression ; but *Daridra-Narayana* implied or brought in an element of a sense of duty which

was enjoined upon man to serve the poor if they wanted to serve God.

Swami Vivekananda is looked upon as a great religious teacher, and indeed he made a definite contribution to the study of both Hindu religion and philosophy, and also in spreading a knowledge and appreciation of this philosophy and religion. His great works on aspects of *Vedanta* in theory and practice still inspire hundreds and thousands of enquirers all over the world. But it has also been said that he was more a philanthropist, one who dedicated himself to the service of man, than a religious theorist or preacher. One need not seek to analyse Vivekananda's personality in this way. It is best to take the service of man as a form of serving God, for, from the point of view of all practical religion, God and Man are the obverse and reverse of the same medal. Vivekananda may be said to have been an innovator in two matters. As his great disciple Sister Nivedita suggested—he was the first to formulate the basic character of Hinduism as a system of thought and as a way of life in the modern age. This is the first great thing we as Indians may note about Vivekananda. Secondly, Vivekananda may be said to have brought before the Western World a new point of view in religious thinking—a new approach to the problems of faith—which they needed very badly. To this also might be added as a pendant that Vivekananda, as one of the thought-leaders of modern India, gave the tone to modern Indian culture. He conceived of an integration of all human religion and culture into one entity claiming the homage of all and sundry.

I consider, and many agree with me also, that Swami Vivekananda's participation and his magisterial and at the same time sweet and reasonable pronouncements at the International Congress of Religions at Chicago in 1893 form a very important event in the intellectual history of modern man. There he proclaimed for the first time the necessity for a new and an enlightened kind of religious

understanding and toleration, and this was particularly necessary in an America which was advancing so rapidly in science and technology, and in wealth and power, which were not, however, divorced from altruistic aspirations and achievements. But apart from a few of the most outstanding figures, particularly in the New England orbit of the United States, generally the religious background was crude and primitive. It had pinned itself down to a literal interpretation of the Bible, and accepted all the dogmas with a conviction which was pathetic in its combination of sincerity and fanatic faith, of credulity and crudity. This very primitive kind of religion was not satisfying to those who were actuated by the spirit of enquiry in a higher and more cultured plane, and for them Vivekananda's message came like rain on a thirsty soil. ...So in this way, we might say that quite a new type of spiritual conversion has taken place in the mind of a considerable portion of intelligent men and women in the West, beginning with America ; and here we see the leaven of *Vedanta* working through Vivekananda. In a novel on Mexican life by D. H. Lawrence—*The Plumed Serpent*—where we have the picture of a revival of the pre-Catholic Aztec religion among a section of political workers in Mexico, the mentality displayed by some of the leaders of this movement is something astoundingly modern. Many of the views expressed by one of the characters in this novel, the hero Ramon talking to the Roman Catholic Bishop, might have been taken over bodily from the writings of Vivekananda. In this way, although the ordinary run of people are not conscious of it, the message which was given out by Vivekananda to America and the Western World at Chicago in 1893, and subsequently to people in America, England and India, has been an effective force in the liberalisation of the human spirit in its religious approach.

The first point in Vivekananda which I mentioned above, namely, his giving before the world a definition of Hinduism in its essence, was a service which was done

not only to India but also in another way to Humanity....

Vivekananda was the lover of all those who had suffered through the injustice of others, and he tried his best to restore them to a sense of human dignity.... It is remarkable how in India in her days of political submission and spiritual inanity, when everything seemed hopeless, and the people had lost all confidence in themselves, a spirit calling us to action like Swami Vivekananda could come into being. That such a person could come at a time when the prospect was bleak, when we seemed to have lost all hope, indicated that God in His mercy never forsakes His people, and this in a way bears out the great idea behind this oft-quoted verse of the *Gita* that whenever righteousness is on the decline and unrighteousness is in the ascendant, God creates Himself as a great avatara or Incarnation—as a Leader to guide men to the right path of salvation. And in that sense Vivekananda was an avatara, a divinely inspired and God-appointed Leader, not only for Man in India, but also for the whole of Humanity in the present age.[27]

A. L. BASHAM

Even now a hundred years after the birth of Narendranath Dutta, who later became Swami Vivekananda, it is very difficult to evaluate his importance in the scale of world history. It is certainly far greater than any Western historian or most Indian historians would have suggested at the time of his death. The passing of the years and the many stupendous and unexpected events which have occured since then suggests that in centuries to come he will be remembered as one of the main moulders of the modern world, especially as far as Asia is concerned, and as one of the most significant figures in the whole history of Indian religion, comparable in importance to such great teachers as Shankara and Ramanuja, and definitely more important

than the saints of local or regional significance such as Kabir, Chaitanya, and the many Nayanmars and Alwars of South India.

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I believe also that Vivekananda will always be remembered in the world's history because he virtually initiated what the late Dr C. E. M. Joad once called 'the counter-attack from the East'. Since the days of the Indian missionaries who travelled in South-East Asia and China preaching Buddhism and Hinduism more than a thousand years earlier, he was the first Indian religious teacher to make an impression outside India.[28]

E. P. CHELISHEV

Reading and re-reading the works of Vivekananda each time I find in them something new that helps deeper to understand India, its philosophy, the way of the life and customs of the people in the past and the present, their dreams of the future.... I think that Vivekananda's greatest service is the development in his teaching of the lofty ideals of humanism which incorporate the finest features of Indian culture....

In my studies of contemporary Indian literature I have more than once had the opportunity to see what great influence the humanistic ideals of Vivekananda have exercised on the works of many writers.... In my opinion, Vivekananda's humanism has nothing in common with the Christian ideology which dooms man to passivity and to begging God for favours. He tried to place religious ideology at the service of the country's national interests, the emancipation of his enslaved compatriots. Vivekananda wrote that the colonialists were building one church after another in India, while the Eastern countries needed bread and not religion. He would sooner see all men turn into confirmed atheists than into superstitious

simpletons. To elevate man Vivekananda identifies him with God....

Though we do not agree with the idealistic basis of Vivekananda's humanism, we recognise that it possesses many features of active humanism manifested above all in a fervent desire to elevate man, to instil in him a sense of his own dignity, sense of responsibility for his own destiny and the destiny of all people, to make him strive for the ideals of good, truth and justice, to foster in man abhorrence for any suffering. The humanistic ideal of Vivekananda is to a certain degree identical with Gorky's Man with a capital letter.

Such a humanistic interpretation of the essence of man largely determines the democratic nature of Vivekananda's world outlook....

Many years will pass, many generations will come and go, Vivekananda and his time will become the distant past, but never will there fade the memory of the man who all his life dreamed of a better future for his people, who did so much to awaken his compatriots and move India forward, to defend his much-suffering people from injustice and brutality. Like a rocky cliff protecting a coastal valley from storm and bad weather, from the blows of ill winds and waves, Vivekananda fought courageously and selflessly against the enemies of his motherland.

Together with the Indian people, Soviet people who already know some of the works of Vivekananda published in the USSR, highly revere the memory of the great Indian patriot, humanist and democrat, impassioned fighter for a better future for his people and all mankind.[29]

HUANG XIN CHUAN

Vivekananda stands out as the most renowned philosopher and social figure of India in modern China.

His philosophical and social thought and epic patriotism not only inspired the growth of nationalist movement in India, but also made a great impact abroad. In 1893, Vivekananda visited Canton and its neighbourhood. He noted his impressions of the visit in a letter addressed to the citizens of Madras. He had some knowledge and understanding of Chinese history and culture. He often cited and spoke highly of China in his writings and speeches. He made a prophecy that the Chinese culture will surely be resurrected one day like the 'Phoenix' and undertake the responsibility of the great mission of integrating the Western and the Oriental cultures. His biographer Romain Rolland has narrated the evolution of Vivekananda's idea on this aspect. When Vivekananda went to America for the first time, he hoped that country would achieve this mission. But during his second visit abroad, he realised that he was deceived by doliar imperialism. He, therefore, came to the conclusion that America could not be an instrument to accomplish this task, but it was China which could do it.

Vivekananda had infinite sympathy for the Chinese people living under the oppression of feudalism and imperialism : and he pinned much hope on them. After his visit to China, he made a very interesting comment. He said : 'The Chinese child is quite a philosopher and calmly goes to work at an age when your Indian boy can hardly crawl on all fours. He has learnt the philosophy of necessity too well.' This shows Vivekananda's enormous sympathy towards the miseries of the children of China in the old society.

While explaining his visionary socialism Vivekananda made an interesting 'gospel'. He said that the future society would be ruled by the labouring people and that this would first take place in China. In 'Modern India' he said : 'But there is hope. In the mighty course of time, the Brahmin and the other higher castes, too are being brought down to the lower status of the Shudras and the Shudras are being raised to higher ranks.... Even before

our eyes, powerful China with fast strides, is going down to Shudrahood, ... yet, a time will come when there will be the rising of the Shudra class, *with their Shudrahood*, ... a time will come when the Shudras of every country ... will gain absolute supremacy in every society.... Socialism, Anarchism, Nihilism, and other like sects are the vanguard of the social revolution that is to follow.'

From the material cited above and his life and works, we can see at least that Vivekananda showed very much concern for, and sympathised with, the people of China who were living under the rule of feudalism and imperialism and placed great hopes on them. But we do not agree with B. N. Datta that the success of the Chinese and the Russian revolutions coming into being at concrete historical moments should be credited to the 'gospel' of Vivekananda. This would make him a divine mystique personality. We have seen that Vivekananda's approach to the laws of social developments was unscientific. However, it is not possible for any advanced thinker to make a correct prediction of the phases and events of the progress of history in every minute details. We should, therefore, appraise Vivekananda in the light of seeking truth from facts.

In conclusion, Vivekananda was the most eminent figure among the democratic patriots in India. He paid high tributes to our glorious ancient culture and loved the Chinese labouring people.

We pay homage to him.[30]

APPENDIX I

Leo Tolstoy (1828-1910)

Russian novelist who served the Russian army from 1852 to 1854. Authored War and Peace (1865-69) and Anna Karenina (1875-77). After 1876 he developed a form of Christian anarchism and devoted himself to social reforms.

Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941)

Renowned litterateur, philosopher and educationist. First Asian to be awarded the Nobel Prize for literature (1913) for the English translation of Gitanjali—an anthology of poems in Bengali. He resigned Knighthood in protest against military atrocities at Jallianwallabagh (1919).

Sri Aurobindo (1872-1950)

Aurobindo Ghosh successfully competed in the ICS examination but did not join the alien government's service to devote himself to the freedom struggle (1902-1910). He retired from politics and went to Pondicherry where he stayed till the last day of his life. Amongst his famous writings are 'The Life Divine' and 'The Synthesis of Yoga'.

Brahmabandhav Upadhyay (1861-1907)

Formerly known as Bhawani Charan Bandyopadhyay, he was a classmate of Narendranath Dutta (later Swami Vivekananda) at the General Assembly's Institution. He later came in contact with Sri Ramakrishna and Keshab Chandra Sen. He turned away from Hinduism to first become a Protestant and later a Catholic, when he started 'Sophia' in 1894. He also

started 'Swaraj' and 'Sandhya', and authored 'Amar Bharat Uddhar', 'Samaj Tattwa', 'Belat Jatri Sannyasir Chithi' etc.

Balgangadhar Tilak (1856-1920)

Born at Ratnagiri, Tilak was a frontline leader of the Indian freedom movement. He was widely acclaimed as 'The Father of Indian Unrest'. Influenced by Swami Vivekananda and Swami Dayananda he did a great amount of study on Vedic Philosophy. He was a scholar in Sanskrit and Mathematics whose works include books like 'The Gita Rahasya' and 'The Arctic Home in the Vedas'.

Bepin Chandra Pal (1858-1932)

Renowned leader of India's freedom movement. In politics, he worked in collaboration with Tilak, Lajpat Rai, and Aurobindo. In 1906, he started a daily paper, the 'Bande Mataram' and in 1913, a monthly journal the 'Hindu Review'. In his youth, he became a Brahmo ; in his later life he was greatly influenced by Sankaracharya's philosophy and also by the Vaishnava philosophy. He was a great preacher, prolific writer, leader of thought. Aurobindo described him as one of the mightiest prophets of nationalism.

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (1869-1948)

Indian nationalist, popularly known as 'Bapuji'—the Father of the Nation. Studied Law in London (1888-91), practised in India (1893). Championed the cause of the blacks in South Africa (1893). Presided over the Indian National Congress (1925-34). Author of 'Hind Swaraj' (1909), 'The Story of My Experiments with Truth', etc.

Jawaharlal Nehru (1889-1964)

Famous Indian politician and the first Prime Minister of independent India. An ardent follower of Gandhiji, he was the architect of India's foreign policy. He was a prolific writer. His

autobiography, 'Discovery of India', 'Glimpses of World History', 'Letters from a Father to a Daughter' etc. are his famous publications. He was awarded the 'Bharat Ratna' in 1955.

Subhas Chandra Bose (1897-1945)

Indian politician. Supported Gandhi and joined Swaraj party (1923) ; Chief Executive Officer of Calcutta (1924) ; President of Bengal Congress (1927) ; led Bengal delegation to National Congress (1928) ; advocated complete independence for India ; many times imprisoned ; wrote 'The Indian Struggle' (1935) and 'Taruner Swapna' ; President of the Indian National Congress (1938).

Vinoba Bhave (Vinayak Bhave, 1895-1982)

A national leader and social reformer. Mahatma Gandhi's chief aide during nationalistic movement. He led the life of an ascetic. After India's independence, Bhave started the Bhoodan (land-gift) movement (1951), walked thousands of miles, crisscrossing India, urging landlords and wealthy peasants to give land voluntarily to poor landless peasants. Also led a nation-wide campaign against cow slaughter.

Romain Rolland (1866-1944)

French man of letters. Received 1915 Nobel Prize for literature for novel cycle 'Jean Christophe (1904-12) and pacifist manifestos collected in An-dessus dé lamelee (1915)'. Other works included a second novel cycle L'âme-enchanteé (1922-33) ; historical and philosophical plays collected in Le Theatre de la revolution and Les Tragedies de la foi (1913) ; biographies Beethoven (1903), Michel-Angelo (1905), Tolstoi (1911), and Mahatma Gandhi (1924) ; had correspondence with Einstein, Schweitzer, Bertrand Russell, Sri Ramakrishna, Swami Vivekananda and Rabindranath Tagore. He was considered an apostle of heroic idealism ; helped found international review Europe (1923).

Will Durant (1885-1981)

Durant, William James, known as Will, American historian, taught at Habor Temple School, New York city (1914-27). After success of his 'Story of Philosophy' (1926), he and his wife Ariel Durant, collaborated on 11-volume 'Story of Civilization' series, comprising 'Our Oriental Heritage' (1935), 'The Life of Greece' (1939), 'Caesar and Christ' (1944), Age of Faith (1950), Renaissance (1953), Reformation (1957), Age of Reason Begins (1961), Age of Louis XIV (1963), Age of Voltaire (1965), Rousseau and Revolution (1967, Pulitzer prize), Age of Napoleon (1975) ; also wrote 'Dual Biography' (1977).

C. Rajagopalachari (1879-1972)

Indian nationalist leader. Closely associated with Gandhi (from 1918) ; served on Working Committee of Indian National Congress (1922-42) ; Chief Minister of Madras (1937-39, 1952-54) ; Governor General of India (1948-50) ; founder of conservative 'Swatantra' (freedom party, 1959).

S. Radhakrishnan (1888-1975)

He was philosopher, humanist, educationist and orientalist. Elected Vice-President of India (1952) ; unanimously elected President of the Republic of India (1962-67). Amongst his many works are Indian Philosophy (1923-27), The Philosophy of the Upanishads (1924), Eastern Religions and Western Thought (1939), East and West (1955).

Ramesh Chandra Majumdar (1888-1980)

A noted historian and academic, he was the Vice-President of the International Committee for publishing 'History of Mankind : Cultural and Scientific Development'. Hony. D. Litt. from Calcutta University, Rabindra Bharati University and Jadavpur University. His publications include the 11-vol. History and Culture of the Indian People, History of Freedom Movement in India (3 vols.), Ancient Indian Colonies in far-East, Swami Vivekananda, History of India (4 vols.), etc.

Suniti Kumar Chatterjee (1890-1977)

An internationally renowned educationist, linguist and an extraordinary luminary in the academic world. Among his English publications are : Bengali Self-taught, A Bengali Phonetic Reader, Indo-Aryan and Hindi, Languages and Literatures of Modern India, Africanism, Balts and Aryans in their Indo-European Background, and India and Ethiopia from the Seventh Century B.C., as well as a large number of papers and monographs.

A. L. Basham (1914-86)

A famous Indologist. As a visiting professor invited by Britain, United States, India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. Recipient of 'Deshikottama' Award from Vishwa Bharati University in 1985. Late Vivekananda Professor of the Calcutta Asiatic Society. Late President of Ramakrishna Movement. 'The Wonder that was India' is the most famous of his books.

E. P. Chelishev (1921-)

A leading Indologist of Soviet Russia, Prof. Chelishev is a renowned scholar of contemporary Indian, especially Hindi, literature. A recipient of the Jawaharlal Nehru Peace Award. For the last thirty years he has been connected with the spread of culture and research on Vivekananda. One of the Vice-Presidents of the Committee for Comprehensive Study of Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Movement.

Huang Xin Chuan

Professor of History of Beijing University, China and Deputy-Director of the Institute of Asian Studies at the Academy of Social Sciences, Beijing, he was written a book in Chinese on Swami Vivekananda entitled 'The Modern Indian Philosopher Vivekananda : A Study'. Also one of the Vice-Presidents of the Committee for Comprehensive Study of Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Movement.

APPENDIX II

Reference

The following books have been used for the compilation of the quotations of Swami Vivekananda :

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Letters of Swami Vivekananda (May, 1976).

Use of any other book or a different edition of the above mentioned books will be mentioned in the index that follows.

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SOME GREAT MEN ON SWAMIJI

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2. Rabindranath told this to Romain Rolland. Romain Rolland reported this to Swami Ashokananda of the Ramakrishna Mission in one of his letters. Our source is Swami Ashokananda.—Editor
3. Courtesy : Visva-Bharati
4. *Prabasi*, Jaishtha 1335 (Bengali Year), pp. 285-86
5. *Sri Aurobindo*, Vol. 2, 1972, p. 37
6. *Ibid.*, Vol. 17, 1971, p. 332
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9. *Vivekananda O Samakalin Bharatbarsha*, Vol. I, Mandal Book House, Calcutta, 1982, p. 351
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13. *Prabuddha Bharata*, May 1963, p. 170
14. *The Discovery of India*, Meridian Books Limited, London, 1960, p. 338
15. *Sri Ramakrishna and Vivekananda*, Advaita Ashrama, Calcutta, 1960, pp. 4-13
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17. *Prabuddha Bharata*, July 1932, p. 352
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20. *Nutaner Sandhan*, Calcutta, pp. 24-6
21. *Prabuddha Bharata*, May 1963, pp. 172-73
22. *The Life of Vivekananda and the Universal Gospel*, Advaita Ashrama, Calcutta, 1970, pp. 4-7, 106-14, 146, 286-89, 307-10
23. *The Story of Civilization : Our Oriental Heritage*, Vol. I, Simon & Schuster, New York, 1954, p. 618
24. *Swami Vivekananda Centenary Memorial Volume*, Calcutta, 1963, p. xiii
25. *Ibid.*, pp. x-xi
26. *History of the Freedom Movement in India*, Vol. I, Firma K. L. Mukhopadhyay, Calcutta, 1962, pp. 358-63
27. *Swami Vivekananda Centenary Memorial Volume*, pp. 228-33
28. *Swami Vivekananda in East and West*, Ramakrishna Vedanta Centre, London, pp. 210-14
29. *Swami Vivekananda Centenary Memorial Volume*, pp. 506-18
30. Huang Xin Chuan delivered a speech on 'Vivekananda and China' at the Asiatic Society, Calcutta, on 4 January 1980. The matter reproduced is the cyclostyled summary of that speech circulated among the audience. A copy of the summary signed by Professor Chuan was presented by him to Swami Lokeswarananda, Secretary of the Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, Gol Park on 7 January 1980.

आत्मनो मोक्षार्थं जगद्धिताय च

Atmano mokshartham jagaddhitaya cha

(For one's own liberation and for the good of the world)

Centenary of the Ramakrishna Mission : 1897-1997

'From my travels in various countries I have come to the conclusion that without organization, nothing great and permanent can be done.... This association will bear the name of him in whose name we have become sannyasins; him, taking whom as your ideal you are leading the householder life..., him whose holy name, and the influence of whose holy life and teaching, have within twelve years of his demise spread in such an unthought-of way both in the East and in the West. Let this Sangha [organization] therefore be named the Ramakrishna Mission. We are but the servants of the Master [Sri Ramakrishna]. May you all help in this work.'

These words were addressed by Swami Vivekananda to a small group of lay and monastic disciples of Sri Ramakrishna who were assembled at Balaram Bose's house in North Calcutta on 1 May 1897. It was at this meeting that the Ramakrishna Mission was established. At a second meeting, on 5 May, the aims and objectives of the Mission were formulated.

During the past one hundred years, the activities of the Mission have grown considerably. With its headquarters located at Belur Math, West Bengal, it now has 136 branches in India as well as abroad. The Mission runs schools and colleges, hospitals and dispensaries; it provides relief to people affected by famine or other natural calamities; and it tries to help the poor and socially handicapped to be self-sufficient.

The ideas that the Mission preaches are, in brief : i) All religions are true; ii) Human beings are divine by nature, and to know that divinity within us is the goal of human life; iii) Serving human beings is the same as worshipping God, and a spiritual person, therefore, has to be in the first place a loving person; iv) Work is worship; and v) The best way to realize one's own divinity is to serve others as God and to do everything in the spirit of worship.

The Ramakrishna Mission is not just an organization for monks. Though a religious movement, it has a much wider implication for today's society. It is a movement which provides people with a goal of a meaningful life. The significance of this movement has yet to unfold in its full glory.

The Ramakrishna Mission founded by Swami Vivekananda will soon enter its one hundredth year. In celebration of this centenary we take pleasure in bringing out this subsidized edition of *My India, the India Eternal.*

MY INDIA
THE INDIA ETERNAL

Swami Vivekananda